

AN EXAMINATION OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL UNDERCURRENTS IN

MOHAYI'S NOVEL ITYALA LAMAWELE

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work, both in
con and in execution.

ABSTRACT

Mqhayi, a Xhosa writer of the early 1900's is able to deconstruct the black and white dichotomy by using the twins as depicting some characteristics of black and white culture. The dissertation thus examines the way in which Mqhayi presents this dichotomy. He manipulates literary forms in order to articulate specific cultural attitudes which were dominant then. Xhosa writers at this time, being entirely dependent on the technologies provided by the missionaries, were forced to use metaphorical devices in order to avoid heavy censorship from the missionaries who were prescriptive and would not accept any book which they considered to be political, their main interest being in books which had a religious theme.

The novel, Ityala Lamawele, coincides with some of the major political moods of its time. It is fully socialized and is absorbed directly into the dominant patterns of thought, mood and outlook of the moment from which it emerges. It addresses in a very subtle manner the socio-political conditions in which the Black people found themselves.

In this novel Mqhayi gives his readers an opportunity to consider some of the simple, straightforward, and yet exciting ways in which an historic response is generated in fiction. He also shows that there is, between the novel and the historic world to which it corresponds, a

fairly direct transitional and transformational medium. This medium is none other than the social history of his text. Mqhayi frequently blends his socio-political experiences with history in his literary works.

The presentation of his work reveals a second level of its consciousness of history. Private life for the characters is monitored and is allowed no total self control either within or beyond the social world. The driving force in this novel is to prove that private destiny is inconceivable beyond its social integration. This makes Mqhayi seem to be subscribing to the principle of non-racialism.

Ityala Lamawele embodies the beliefs and assumptions of a socialized humanism and responds very closely to the historical realities of the time of its production. It alludes to a national oppression of the majority by the minority and reveals a consciousness which was far more politically aware than that found in any other novel produced then. This is undoubtedly due to the political developments in South Africa at that time. The harm that was done to the Black people by the conquerors is highlighted and Mqhayi is trying to rid his people of this slave mentality. In doing this Mqhayi does not put his case blatantly. Instead he shows his people what happens to a nation when it abandons its customs and traditions. This is what his people are doing. The twin brothers are used as vehicles to convey Mqhayi's message and to illustrate this black-white culture dichotomy.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION.

Literature in Africa has been greatly influenced by the missionaries. These missionaries committed African oral forms of literature to writing,¹ their main objective being to spread the Word of God and to introduce western civilization. They decided to teach the African people how to read and write so that their task would be made easy through the distribution of Biblical texts and without having to make physical contact with the people they so wished to civilize. This was accepted by some of the African people while others rejected it. Ngugi (1986:69) writes the following about the missionaries and the colonial administrators:

The printing press, the publishing houses and the educational context of the novel's birth were controlled by the missionaries and the colonial administrators ... the Literature Bureau would not publish an African novel which had any but religious themes and sociological themes which were free from politics.

It should be noted that a similar situation existed in South Africa. The missionaries controlled printing presses and they had the final say on what should be published. As time went by, African people became dissatisfied with the way in which the missionaries viewed their culture. They therefore devised means to

¹ Opland, J. 1983 Xhosa Oral Poetry pp 194-195

protect their culture. Certain authors therefore used extended metaphors in order to camouflage the real message from the missionaries, Mqhayi being one such writer. He states in the preface of his 1931 version of Ityala Lamawele that the 1914 version was in an allegorical mode.

This dissertation views Mqhayi from the perspective of his being a committed writer and as such his writing is seen as a form of protest literature. It is for this reason that the dissertation endeavours to examine the socio-political undercurrents in his novel, Ityala Lamawele.

This study has been motivated, primarily, by the arguments and discussions that are currently topical in literary circles. Critics like Emenyonu,² Mutloatse,³ Brown,⁴ et cetera, advocate that western literary conventions should not be used to assess African literature as they feel that whatever the author writes about will draw heavily from his indigenous mode of literary expression. This suggests that a critic should be conversant with the culture of the author whose work he is trying to assess. For this reason, they feel strongly that the present literary definitions and conventions should not be used in assessing literature in indigenous African languages. These defenders of African literature propose that this type of literature should be

² Emenyonu, E. 1978 The Rise of the Igbo Novel

³ Mutloatse, M. Ed. 1985 Forced Landing

⁴ Brown, D.M. 1982 In Chapman, M. Ed. Soweto Poetry

assessed differently from English literature, for instance. Their reason behind such an approach is that African literature by its nature is functional and this functional aspect surpasses all other aspects of its production. African literature will thus always depict and dramatize a particular aspect of African life and will invariably centre around the political conditions in which the author finds himself and his fellow countrymen.

This dissertation therefore is divided into six chapters. Chapter one, deals with Mqhayi's biography. This is done in order to see if his writings do reflect his experiences. In this chapter we have included all the aspects of his life which might have contributed to his character and, indirectly or directly, to his literary skills.

Chapter two deals with the plot structure of Ityala Lamawele. The aim here is to see if Mqhayi follows standard literary conventions and if not, what effect this has had on the impact of his novel. In doing this the plot structure of Ityala Lamawele will be tested against the conventional one to see its socio-political implications, if there are any.

Ityala Lamawele as an extended metaphor is dealt with in chapter three. It is clear that Mqhayi as one of the early writers could not address the political situation of South Africa directly in his novel. He had to use an

extended metaphor to avoid the strict laws of censorship.//
 This he did by using a Biblical story and adapting it to his culture. In addressing the political situation of his time he uses the same tools which his people use. By so doing he identifies fully with them.

In chapter four the emphasis is on characterization. This is studied for two basic purposes:

- (i) To see how these characters contribute to the socio-political undercurrents in Mqhayi's novel.
- (ii) To assess if Mqhayi has followed the prescriptions of the literary conventions in his portrayal of characters. Also included is an examination of how these characters operate in the novel.

The traditional setting is dealt with in chapter five. Like the other chapters this one is also aimed at exposing the socio-political undercurrents in Ityala Lamawele.

Chapter six is the conclusion and summarizes the observations of the dissertation.

1.1 The aim of the study

This study is aimed at assessing the extent of Mqhayi's contribution to Xhosa literature. It is not going to take the number of books that he has written as a criterion for judging his contribution. Rather his contribution will be judged by the impact his writing has had on the other writers who came after him.

With regard to this new tradition the objective of this dissertation will be to reveal the socio-political undercurrents which are found in Ityala Lamawele. This will be done in conjunction with the assessment of the impact he has made in Xhosa literature. Writing about the South African writers, Gordimer in Killam (1973:33) observes:

When I began to think about writers in my own country, I saw that the reasons why many of them have written as they have are centred more in the social situation (my emphasis) they share than in their individual differences of talent and temperament.

Gordimer is suggesting that the social situation plays an important role in determining the way in which one writes. The suggestion here is that the society and the environment in which the society finds itself will always be reflected in the work of art.

1.1.1 The scope of the study

The scope of this dissertation will not be limited to the socio-political undercurrents in Ityala Lamawele only but will also treat Mqhayi's pioneering work in committing Xhosa literature into writing. Although he was not the first writer to be published in Xhosa, Mqhayi can be regarded as a pioneer in this field because he was one of the first people to produce a book totally different from the earlier ones. Most of these were translated versions of English books, for example, the

first part of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (translated by Tiyo Soga and the second part translated by Tiyo's son, John Henderson Soga) the translated version appearing as Uhambo Lomhambi. In 1909 H.M. Ndawo published his Uhambo LukaGqobhoka which was reminiscent of the Pilgrim's Progress in many ways. Mqhayi was therefore one of the first Xhosa writers to publish something original.

It is also within the scope of this dissertation to investigate and determine if a tradition has been established which follows Mqhayi's example. If so, what has kept this tradition going and if not, what has stopped it developing.

The socio-political undercurrents in this study will be taken to mean the arrangement of a society - constitution of society - and the relations of the communities with the government or public affairs. This means that the society sees itself as a force that can expose and challenge some of the malpractices of those who are in power. In this case the topic implies that there is another level of interpretation that can be given to Ityala Lamawele other than that the novel deals with the law suit between the twin brothers. Particular reference will thus be made to the political implications of certain social institutions as they existed in Mqhayi's time.

In simpler terms this novel deals with the society and with the way that society is organized as a political

force. Knappert (1979:XV) seems to be holding the same view as the one above when he writes about the author:

... he is the one who gives beautiful shape to these powerful emotions, the truth of which is in the life of his society itself; he voices the needs and wishes of his community with which he is one. (My emphasis). He is not estranged from his world, he is in the midst of it.

From what Knappert has written it becomes clear that the author is not locked up in an island. He lives with other people who have great influence on him. In fact they mould his character. This point is further strengthened by Mugo (1978:188) who quotes Ngugi as having said the following about literature:

Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European Imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism. Our culture over the last hundred years has developed against the same stunting, dwarfing background.

Much has been written on Mqhayi but I feel that most of it has been drawn from his works in general. My intention is to delve into Ityala Lamawele and concentrate on what I have chosen to refer to as the socio-political undercurrents. For this reason I think it would be proper to give a biographical outline of the author before tackling the book itself. Kunene (1967:13) writes:

... there is...no doubt that the understanding of an author who is clearly dedicated to a campaign of social reform is enhanced by a knowledge of his social and cultural world, its effect upon him, and the effect upon him also of any factors which being external to this social milieu yet bombard it towards a forceful...change.

Although the knowledge of the author's life does not provide solutions, it does, however, give some clues from which one can make intelligent guesses.

1.2 S.E.K. Mqhayi and his environment:

A biographical outline.

In this section we shall look at the general environment in which Mqhayi grew up and later in the dissertation we can observe how the environment influenced him. For purposes of this study the environment will be divided into three main institutions, namely, the home, the school and the church. The experiences gained outside these institutions will also be considered and will include people he lived or mixed with, either as friends, colleagues or any other person who might have had an influence on him. The environment, in this context, will be taken to mean both living and non-living objects in and around Mqhayi.

The purpose of giving Mqhayi's biography is to see what influences the environment and his experiences had on his writing. There are certain points which he raises in his autobiography and they seem to be very important to him because they, somehow, shaped his life. Some points of

interest in the different institutions are highlighted below.

The lack of a mother figure in Mqhayi's life is reflected in his Ityala Lamawele. Vuyisile's wife, who is the mother of the twins and whose sons are the key characters, is not given any prominence. This lack of a mother figure, coupled with the dictates of culture, could possibly account for the relatively minor role played by women in this novel.

School had a profound influence on Mqhayi's writing. The clash of cultures not only made him sensitive to both African as well as Western culture but also made him see correspondences and differences between the two cultures which could be used for the benefit of his people. This is also found in Ityala Lamawele where Mqhayi does not blindly accept all aspects of his culture. He points out the weaknesses even in his culture. One of the points one picks up in his autobiography is that he was a very capable scholar during his school days. This is borne out by the fact that he later became a prolific writer who published poetry and novels and was also involved in journalism.

The skills he gained as a journalist are evident in some of his works, including Ityala Lamawele. Like a journalist his story takes the form of a newspaper story. Bell (1991:153) points out some major characteristics of a story which is meant for a newspaper. He observes:

The result is placed before the action which caused it ... it is not the action or the process which takes priority but the outcome.

It is interesting to note that this is what we find in Ityala Lamawele. The opening line in the book tells us about the outcome. We are introduced to Wele who is laying a charge against his brother. Laying a charge is the outcome of a quarrel or a misunderstanding that has taken place between the two brothers. Bell (1991: 154) remarks that 'the news story consists of instalments of information...'. This is what Mqhayi has done in his book. In chapter one we are introduced to Wele who lays a charge. In the next chapter we get another 'instalment' of information when the midwives add new information to what Wele has reported. In another chapter we get yet another 'instalment' when Wele reports certain details which took place from their boyhood days up to the time they went to the circumcision school. Bell also feels that newspaper stories 'reflect ideologies and priorities held in society'. All the above points are reflected in Mqhayi's Ityala Lamawele.

In the sub-heading which deals with the church and its influence, we concentrate on the effects which the church had on Mqhayi as reflected in his Ityala Lamawele. From the Christian teachings one can assume that Mqhayi learnt to be tolerant. This element of tolerance is seen in Mqhayi's characters in Ityala Lamawele. He did not accept everything that was said to be advocated by

western religion. Instead Mqhayi took some elements from the western religion and reinforced his own religion. The use of a quotation from Genesis and the example he uses shows that Mqhayi could see some parallel in the ways of the Christians to the ways of the so-called pagans. This led to Mqhayi being able to accept both the so-called pagans as well as the Christians. To him, the most important thing was that they were all human beings. He did not bother himself about their religious beliefs. This, too, is reflected in his Ityala Lamawe. It is with these highlights in mind that we shall be looking at Mqhayi's biographical sketch.

1.2.1 The home and its influence

Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi was born in a small village called Gqumahashe near Alice, on the banks of Tyhume River, Ciskei, on the 1st of December 1875. He was the youngest child and the only son in a family of five. The author in UMqhayi WaseNtabozuko tells us how eager and anxious Mqhayi's father was to have a son. Not having a male issue was a matter of great concern to him. His desperate prayers were however finally answered when his wife gave birth to a boy. This boy was named Samuel, perhaps a prophetic gesture by a man who obviously had a deep belief in the teachings of the Bible.

As the only son at home the young Samuel had to take charge of all the tasks proportionate to a boy of his age. In his autobiography Mqhayi (1975:33) writes:

... ndithe ngokuba ndedwa kokwethu, ndahlala
ndixakekile.

... being the only one (only son) at home, I
was always busy.

From what he writes in his autobiography it becomes clear that he learnt to be responsible at an early age. Mqhayi also tells us about the excitement of the people in his village when they heard that Ziwani, Mqhayi's father, had been blessed with a son. The feelings of the community are summed up in the poet's declamation. He says:

Lo mfana siyamngulela;
No Ndikhoyo simbulela;
Ngamana womlondoloza,
Kwiinto eziza zinkqonkqoza,
Zifun'ukumfukamela,
Angaze waphumelela
.....
Simcelela zonk'izipho;
.....
Abe luncedo esizweni,
Nempilo eluhlangeni.
Makube njalo. (Mqhayi, 1975:28-29)

For this young man we pray;
And to the Almighty we give thanks;
Would He preserve him,
From things that come knocking, (temptations)
Intent on stifling his progress,
So that he does not prosper,
.....
On his behalf we ask for many talents;
.....
That he be of help to the nation,
And succour in the race.
Let it be so.

This informal prayer and the concluding formula suggest the religious tone and atmosphere which prevailed then at Mqhayi's home.

Mqhayi grew up the hard way. He was only two and a half years old when his mother died and as a result he had to look upon his sisters as mother figures. But his oldest sister, being about eleven years old when their mother died, was also young and still needed to be looked after by a mother herself. This leads one to conclude that there was a lack of a true mother figure in Mqhayi's early life.

He was from a distinguished and a highly respected family. In his autobiography Mqhayi (1975:27) notes:

... waye ubawo engumntu wokugala ofundileyo kuloo ngingqi.

... and my father was the first person to be educated in that area.

Coming from a respected family did not make Mqhayi despise other people and their way of life and he grew up like any other village boy. He was naughty like any other child. In his autobiography Mqhayi (1975:33) writes:

Bekukho nomdlalo wokufaka intonga phakathi kwemilenze le, ibe lihashe endikhwele kulo...,

There was a game of placing a stick between the legs, making it my pony...,

and he goes on to say:

Umdlalo wethu yayikukubopha iikati, sirole ngazo amahlahla, senze iintlanti..., (1975:34)

Our sport was inspanning cats and pulling twigs with which we made kraals.

In 1885, when he was about nine years old, his family moved to Centane settling close to chief Nzanzana's homestead.

About Mqhayi's stay in Nzanzana's place, Jordan (1973:106) writes:

We owe a great deal to the six years in Centane. For it was during this time that Mqhayi began to understand the culture and history of his people ... It was there that he began to appreciate the beauty, dignity and subtleties of Xhosa, and to acquire the amazingly wide vocabulary that even Tiyo Soga would have envied.

The culture and history of the Xhosa people left an indelible impression on Mqhayi's mind. The two became part of him channelling his way of perceiving things and shaping his character. While in Centane he learnt traditional court procedure and most aspects which pertain to culture such as the custom of sending boys of a certain age to the circumcision school. He reports in his autobiography that he also learnt of customs and traditions pertaining to Xhosa religion and the meaning and importance of such things as "imidudo, ukuxhentsa, iintlombe, intonjane, imiyeyezelo, amadini" (1975:45) etcetera, peculiar to Xhosa people. This move to Centane had an influence on Mqhayi who obviously benefited from living with the people there. He confirms this when he (Mqhayi) (1975:46) reflects:

Ukuba ndandingabanga kwaCentane le minyaka mithandathu, ngathi kum ngendingazange ndibe luncedo lwanto ebuzweni endibubo; nemfundwana endinayo ngathi inge ingandenzelanga nto, inge

ingabanga luncedo kumaXhosa; nam ngathi
ngendingaphantsi kunalo mgangatho ndikuwo.
Ndiyambulela ubawo owanyanzelisayo, waya
kwaCentane, kanti uya kufundisa mna kowethu.

Had I not been in Centane for six years, it seems to me I would not have been of any help to my nation; even the little education that I have, it seems would not have done anything for me, it would not have been of any help to the Xhosas; I, too, would have been below the standard in which I am. I thank my father who insisted and left for Centane for it is where I got an insight into the national life of my people.

On the basis of the above it can be seen that his stay at Nzanzana's place helped mould Mqhayi's character. He took pride in his people, his nation and their way of life - culture. Commenting on Mqhayi's stay in Centane, Qangule (1978:6) observes:

It was, amongst other factors, the experience gained in Kentani (Centane) which kindled in his mind, as he matured, the flame of nationalism which, as years progressed, ballooned and aroused in him the sentiment of patriotism.

In 1891 his father left for Grahamstown and Mqhayi and his sister went back to Alice.

1.2.2 The school and its influence

Mqhayi started schooling at the age of seven. The first school he went to was called Evergreen. He was very young at that time compared to his classmates. This he states in his UMqhayi WaseNtabozuko when he (Mqhayi) (1975:53) writes:

Ziintombi, zinde, ngamakhwenkwe makhulu.

On the one hand the maids are tall, on the other hand boys are big.

Having to study with children who were older than himself influenced his behaviour pattern. He spent about three years at Evergreen. In 1885 his family left for Centane where they stayed for six years. It is worth noting that during the six years that Mqhayi spent in Centane, he did not make any academic progress. Outside the school buildings he collected a lot of valuable information e.g. being introduced to the traditional court procedures, the meaning of custom and tradition and the acquisition of the Xhosa language. At this stage Mqhayi was always dreaming about going back to school. His staying out of school was not from choice. He had other responsibilities such as looking after cattle. Although he did not make any academic achievement in the six years he spent in Centane, he had no regrets, for he (Mqhayi) (1975:45) observes:

Yomithandathu loo minyaka ibe yeyemfundo enkulu
kum yezinto zesiXhosa, kwanentetho yesiXhosa
ngokwayo.

Those six years were of tremendous educational value to me about Xhosa things and the Xhosa language itself.

It was during his stay at Nzanzana's place that he was exposed to the traditional court procedures which led to his writing of this novel, Ityala Lamawe, which was published in 1914.

It was only after 1890 that he went back to school after his father, Ziwani, had decided to go to Grahamstown. He did not go with his father to Grahamstown but instead,

his sister took him to Lovedale where he continued with his schooling again. In 1891 he was enrolled at the nearby Station School. There he proved himself to be a gifted child. In the following extract Mqhayi (1975:54) remembers:

Ndizitsale iingqondo ezi titshala, ngokuba bukhali kwinto yonke, ezinye ndizanceda ngokwam esiXhoseni.

I drew the attention of these teachers by being sharp (brilliant) in everything, helping some of them, in Xhosa, myself.

Mqhayi who had become very popular with both pupils and teachers, was rewarded for his good conduct and hard work by being promoted at the end of the year. This popularity must have influenced him directly or indirectly. He did not want to let anybody down because they had a high regard for him.

He struggled for his education, not having enough money to see him through without interruption. Again, growing up the hard way contributed to moulding his character. It strengthened him and taught him to face the hardships of this world with great fortitude. After completing his primary education he enrolled for a teacher's diploma.

During his holidays he would go to East London to seek vacation jobs in order to pay school fees. He tells us that he would take whatever work that came his way no matter how hard or thankless the job might be. Thus he completed his diploma and started teaching.

When he was in the teaching profession he could not bear the conditions under which he had to serve. He wanted to teach his pupils the truth but the authorities wanted him to teach history the way they chose. Commenting on Mqhayi's honesty and convictions Jordan (1973:106) observes:

... during the few years in the world Mqhayi's views on South African history and how it should be taught had undergone such modification that he found himself compelled either to be false to his own convictions and teach history as the authorities would have him teach it, or to give up teaching altogether. He decided on the latter.

Jordan has portrayed Mqhayi as a man who had very strong convictions and as a man who did not want to cheat his people, a man who sacrificed his post for the love of his people.

The school played a very important role in Mqhayi's life. It brought him closer to the missionaries and that gave him an opportunity to study them and understand them better. Apart from being exposed to some of the western ways of life, he also learnt how to read and write which he used as his most powerful weapon in trying to defend his cultural heritage.

1.2.3 The church and its influence

The history of the Mqhayi family shows that they were staunch members of the Christian faith. Krune, Mqhayi's grandfather, was a Christian. He might have been

influenced by Maqoma who took over chieftainship after the death of Ngqika in 1829,⁵ and whose councillor was Krune. Maqoma was greatly influenced by the missionaries and, although he was a chief of the Xhosa people, he still wanted to reconcile the traditional culture with the western culture and this made him unpopular with the hard core traditionalists. Mqhayi (1975:23) comments:

UMaqoma ke yinkosi ethe yalithanda iLizwi
lenkosi kwasekufikeni kwalo nabefundisi.

Maqoma indeed is the chief who liked the Word of God from the time it was introduced by the missionaries.

Ziwani, Krune's son was a preacher, married to a Christian woman. She gave birth to a son whom Ziwani named Samuel Krune Mqhayi.

Mqhayi tells us in his autobiography that when his parents failed to produce a male child, they had resorted to prayer. Mqhayi (1975:27) writes:

... uyise nonina bada benza isicelo, ukuze bamzuze; kuba babezala iintombi zodwa.

... his father and mother had to make a plea in order to procure him; because she was giving birth to girls only.

It would appear that their prayers were heard and the woman gave birth to a baby boy. The boy was named Samuel. This is reminiscent of Hannah's story in the Bible where she made an undertaking that if she could be blessed with

⁵ Peires, J.B. 1981 The House of Phalo p.83

a baby boy, the life of her son would be dedicated to the service of the Lord. The story goes,

The next morning Elkanah and his family got up early, and after worshipping the Lord, they went back home to Ramah. Elkanah had intercourse with his wife Hannah, and the Lord answered her prayer. So it was that she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, and explained, "I asked the Lord for him" (1 Sam.1,19-20)

Given the circumstances surrounding Mqhayi's birth, one can conclude that his parents made the same undertaking as Hannah did. So Mqhayi was brought up in a church environment and he appears to have had strong religious beliefs. Unfortunately when he was in Centani he could not attend church services because he had to look after cattle.

It should be noted that Mqhayi seems to have chosen certain parts of the Bible and used them for the benefit of his people. It would appear that he concentrated mostly on those parts of the Bible which would help him build the image of his people. Thammar's twins in the Bible might be used as an example of such excerpts. This can be said to be a way of proving to the Xhosa nation that there is nothing wrong in a man observing his own customs and traditions. The mere fact that the circumstances surrounding the birth of Thammar's twins and Vuyisile's twins are similar is ample evidence that Mqhayi was putting the western nations and the African nations on par. He also appears to be supporting the

idea that the Xhosa people should take what is good in western culture to enrich their own culture. //

Mqhayi gave himself to Jesus at the age of seven. He was greatly influenced by his sister who would, always when passing through a forest, say a little prayer. It was during that time that Mqhayi started praying and those short prayers left an impression on him. He learnt to have trust in the Lord and he took it upon himself to be the light that would guide people through the paths of righteousness. When he left Alice with the aim of joining the work force, he tells us in his autobiography that he chose a verse from the Scriptures which guided his life. The verse reads:

Humble yourself in the face of the Lord, and He shall lift you up. (Jas. 4, 10)

It is striking to note that the caption of the chapter he chose reads: 'Friendship with the World'. This is what Mqhayi was preaching to his people. He wanted them to humble themselves so that the spirit of friendship, and consequently peace, could prevail.

That Mqhayi was humble cannot be denied. Although he was a teacher by profession he could still socialize with people of different educational levels. We are told that he even went to chief Kona's great place to assist in improving the standard of living of the people there. Commenting on his humility Jordan (1973:104-5) observes.

He understood alike the illiterate and the educated, and as a result, his social influence was very wide.

Understanding people is one of the qualities of leadership. A leader who does not understand his people will not be able to lead them properly. It will not be easy for him to have access to them and that can close all the channels of communication. Among other things, the church had a great influence on Mqhayi's character teaching him to have respect for both young and old. He also learnt that the person who humbles himself will be exalted. All those teachings are also found in the Christian religion.

Mqhayi knew prominent religious leaders who inculcated in him the love for his people and his land. Those leaders were Rev. P. Mzimba, Rev. W. Rubusana, Rev. E. Makiwane, Rev I. Wauchope and many others. Although Mqhayi had contacts with prominent religious people, he never deserted his own people - the "Red people". He respected them as well as their customs and traditions. Jordan (1973:107) comments:

Because he was nurtured in Christian culture and in primitive culture of his own people at the same time, Christianity was for him not an "escape from the City of Destruction," but a mode of life abundant that was not irreconcilable with his native culture.

There were good things he noticed in both cultures and high regard for his own culture did not make him turn a blind eye to its shortcomings. The two traditions - Christian and African succeeded in creating in Mqhayi an unbiased and a completely informed sense of universal

justice. This success seems to originate from the fact that Mqhayi committed himself at an early age to helping his people. This commitment stems from the love and respect he had for his culture as well as his people. From the western culture, one is inclined to say that Mqhayi liked some of the things which he felt could lift the standard of his people if they were done properly. He states that he wanted to serve in religious, social, political and educational affairs. In other words this means that there was something which attracted him to the above institutions. It could be argued that there were at least two things which attracted him to these institutions. Firstly it is possible that he saw something which would benefit his people from these institutions or he wanted to put right what was wrong in those institutions. Secondly he most probably wanted to encourage adoption and adaptation of certain cultural aspects of the West and incorporate them into his African culture. Although Mqhayi accepted the Christian faith whose authorities were against the African traditional culture, he still respected his culture. It was against the Christian principles for any one who called himself a Christian to go to the initiation school. Mqhayi was quite aware of such prejudice but he still went to the initiation school. Justifying his action, Mqhayi (1975:58) states:

Engqondweni yam ndedwa, ndandiqonda ukuba ndiya
kuba ngumsebenzi kweli lizwe lakowethu
lasemaXhoseni - umsebenzi kwizinto zelizwi;
kwezentlalo yasemakhaya; kwezombuso
nakwezemfundo. Kwamhlophe kum ukuba andiyi

kwenza nanye yezi zinto iphumelele, ndingabanga yindoda njengabo.

In my own mind, I knew I was going to serve in this country of mine of Xhosaland - serve in religious; social; political; and educational affairs. It was clear to me that I would not be able to do a single thing successfully, without being a man like them - (Without going to the initiation school for circumcision).

He not only respected people but also their way of life. The argument he advances above shows complete dedication and respect for the indigenous Xhosa culture. He knew that the traditional people were very firm when it came to things like custom. He had his religious convictions but still wanted to be accepted by the community he so wished to help. In order for him to be accepted, he had to be circumcised. In the process he risked the possibility of being excommunicated by the church officials because he knew that the missionaries were against circumcision. This should not be taken to mean that he did not care much for Christianity but should be taken as a means of reaching out to his people. He knew that if he did not go to the circumcision school he would be despised by his people. Mqhayi's life seems to be a kind of an art of blending two opposing cultures. That these cultures are not necessarily irreconcilable is borne out by the success with which he manages to blend certain aspects of them. This success also betrays the bigotry of those who are partisan in their evaluation of these cultures.

1.2.4 The general experiences and their influence

It has already been mentioned that Mqhayi was from a simple family in terms of economic standing. That factor moulded him and made him learn to fend for himself. Mqhayi owes his social standing to the people of Centane, especially those who were close to Nzanzana. The love he had for the Xhosa language made him devise means to preserve it. This love of his language was fostered by W. G. Bennie who was chief inspector for Native (sic) Education in the Cape at the time. Together they standardized Xhosa spelling and codified Xhosa grammar.

Out of all the people who had an influence on Mqhayi's character, Rubusana can be counted as one of those who introduced him to politics. When he resigned his teaching post Mqhayi became secretary of the congregation of the Reverend Rubusana. Gérard (1971:54) observes:

...(Rubusana) fostered his (Mqhayi's) concern with social and racial problems.

About Mqhayi's association with Rubusana, Shepherd (1975:13) writes:

This (association with Rubusana) gave him an introduction to social questions and matters of race relations, particularly as they affected black and white.

At the beginning of the 1900's⁶ Mqhayi was deeply involved in journalism. He worked for the local newspapers, "Izwi Labantu" and "Imvo". He was one of the editors of "Izwi Labantu". In East London he assisted Jabavu in the editing of "Imvo Zabantsundu". His writing skills were enhanced during that period. It was during his involvement in journalism that he came to be known as the poet of the nation (*Imbongi yesizwe*) because of the poetry he used to contribute to the newspapers.

It is worth mentioning that Mqhayi grew up at a time when Whites, both English and Afrikaner, were hungry for land especially the gold and diamond fields. The diamond was first discovered in 1867 near Hopetown and from that time onwards the Whites started fighting over these fields. Through the introduction of these industries the culture of the Black people was slowly giving way to the Western culture. Taxes were introduced at about the same time. Writing about the aim of introducing these taxes in 1851, Oakes (1989:164) claims:

... the bosses - farmers and mine-owners preferred coercion to get Africans to work for them. The favourite strategy was to strip the African of his livelihood - the land on which he farmed ... Other methods included taxation - forcing Africans to earn money to pay the taxes...

Mqhayi, took it upon himself to fight for the Black people. He wrote an article in "Imvo Zabantsundu" in which he challenged the White officials. Jabavu, who was the chief editor at that time, refused to publish the

⁶ Opland, J. Xhosa Oral Poetry p.208

article in English, saying the whites would feel offended if they were to understand its contents. For that reason, the article only appeared in Xhosa. This made Jabavu unpopular with his contemporaries. He was seen by his contemporaries as serving the interests of the White people. He supported the Land Act of 1913 and that made him unpopular with most of the prominent people of his time. This point is put clearly by Scheub in Andrzejewski et. al. (1985:594)

Jabavu was a controversial editor; he supported the Cape Liberals and Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr of the Afrikaner Bond, and some of Jabavu's followers began to turn away from him ... In 1912, Jabavu supported the Land Act, which limited the right of Africans to own land, and this brought about his downfall: he was now revealed as a tool of White politicians.

When Mqhayi was born the missionaries were still busy spreading the seeds of Western civilization and some Black people were not happy with this. As early as 1883 people had come together to discuss ways of protesting against the white officials. An association to this effect was formed on the 4th July 1883. It was called South African Aborigines Association. Joseph Ngaba in 'Isigidimi SamaXosa', (1883:5) gives the objectives of the 1883 Association as follows:

Yintlanguaniso emiselwe ukuba ibe liziko lokuxoxa zonke izinto zokunyusa uhlanga. Nokuba zeze Mfundo, nokuba zeze Ngqeqesho, nokuba zezo Lauulo, nokuba zezamatuba empumelelo, "nokuba zeze mihlaba (ukubandeza igada lobawo ngokuthenga amathuba kulemihla mibi) Amasiko imikwa nazo zonke izinto zenveli (sic) ekubonakalayo ukuba ziyi ntintelo ekuhlumeni kohlanga ziya kuxoxwa kuyo le Mbumba.

It is an association which has been formed as a forum for discussing all issues pertaining to the upliftment of the nation - be they educational, disciplinary, judicial, potential opportunities, or the land issue (refusing us our fathers' land by pretending to be buying shares during these bad days) This association would discuss those customs, traditions and cultural aspects which could be seen to be a hindrance to the growth of the nation.

The formation of this association must have had an influence on him because he writes in his autobiography that he wanted to serve in social, educational and political affairs of his people. It should be noted that these were the objectives of the 1883 association.

1.2.5 His contribution in literature generally

Mqhayi has made an invaluable contribution in the field of Xhosa literature ranging from poetry, through translations to novels. He also contributed a number of articles to "Imvo Zabantsundu" and "Izwi labantu" and played a vital role in the composition of the national anthem, "Nkosi Sikelel' IAFrika". The first stanza of this anthem was composed by Enoch Sontonga and Mqhayi composed and published the last seven stanzas. It is interesting to note that the stanzas he composed seem to be pleading with Black people to respect their culture. He condemns those who look down upon their culture and value the culture of foreigners and conquerors. This is exactly what we get in Ityala Lamawele. What he proposes is finding a happy medium.

Mqhayi's first novel, USamson, appears to be very closely related to the Biblical story of Samson and Delilah. Opland (1983:94) states that USamson and UDon Jadu are 'political allegories'. Ityala Lamawele, a novel which was published seven years after the publication of USamson took a slightly different form from the earlier works. It was one of the first novels to look at the African situation. Mqhayi was amongst the first Xhosa writers to break away from the missionary tradition - that of preaching through literature. UDon Jadu is a novel dealing with the political as well as social issues. In this novel Mqhayi tries to bring to light some of the weaknesses of the Xhosa speaking people while looking at both groups, the Xhosa people and the white people objectively. He praises and condemns both groups equally if there is an action which warrants that. In his treatment of society in this novel he looks at a broad spectrum of the society's activities. Imihobe Nemibongo was Mqhayi's first attempt to publish his poetry in book form. These poems were meant for school children at lower levels. He also included other poems by other authors in the same book.

UMhlekezazi uHintsa deals with chief Hintsa and the other tribes like the Bomvana, the Zulus and many others who should commemorate him for what he had done for them. Inzuzo is a collection of serious poems with diverse themes, all of them composed by Mqhayi. Isikhumbuzo SikaNtsikana was composed in memory of the first Xhosa prophet and convert, Ntsikana kaGaba. USogqumahashe deals

with Chief Nathaniel Cyril Mhala the founder of "Izwi Labantu" and its first editor. Sogqumahashe is Cyril Mhala's praise name.

Ubomi BukaMfundisi John Knox Bokwe is a biography of the Rev. J.K. Bokwe of Ntselamanzi. UMqhayi WaseNtabozuko is an autobiography. UAdonisi Wasentlango is a translation from the Afrikaans of Kees van die Kalahari. UAggrey UmAfrika is another translation. It is about a Ghanaian visitor to South Africa who was greatly loved by the African people because he was fighting for their rights wanting South Africa to be a multi-racial society. It is worth noting that some of Mqhayi's works never reached the printing presses. He states in UMqhayi WaseNtabozuko that some of his writings were never published because he did not have money to pay the publishers.⁷

In 1975, Opland discussed some of Mqhayi's poems which were never published. He later included the two poems in his anthology Isigodlo SikaPhalo. In one of those poems, entitled 'A! Silimela' Mqhayi argues for a more equitable society summoning all the nations to gather so that the stars could be apportioned. The stars here have an important significance in Xhosa culture. Circumcised men count their *ubudoda* (manhood) years in terms of stars, (*izilimela*) in particular the Pleiads. The suggestion here is that they should come and get what is due to them. He invites the following nations: The Zulus,

⁷ Scott, P. 1976 Mqhayi in Translation p.31

Sothos, Xhosas, Tswanas, Swazis, Shangaan, British and Boers. All these nations are to be apportioned their stars. It should be noted that these are nations and races that are found in South Africa and the implication is that all the South African people should have a share of what this country can offer or produce.

It is interesting to note that in most of his writings Mqhayi seems to be emphasising two main points: religion and the socio-political issues. Even in his biographies, he has selected only those people who played major roles in religion, politics and education. In his works in general Mqhayi appears to be preoccupied with an ideal society. This is also the case with Ityala Lamawele.

1.3 Conclusion.

With the biographical outline given, it is hoped that, although it will not solve all the problems in the contents of Ityala Lamawele it will, however, shed some light. We shall be able to expose the socio-political undercurrents in Mqhayi's novel. This outline will help us understand better the factors which influenced him. I share the same view with Ogungbesan (1979:2) when he states that:

... the writer's duty is to explore in depth the human condition.

He further goes on to say the artist

draws his vision from experience which begins with self-knowledge (1979:2)

The second quotation explains to us that the experiences of the author will often be reflected in his literary works. Although Mqhayi's books include such a wide variety, i.e. poetry, biographies, prose, and translations, each of these works seems to throw some light on the issues raised in Ityala Lamawele. Ityala Lamawele is therefore a kind of amalgam of virtually all these works in the sense that in its treatment of socio-political matters it blends prose and poetry. In his novel Mqhayi shows that he was interested in both worlds - the Western world and the traditional African world - and he sought in his art to blend the two. In the next few chapters, an attempt will be made to show how Mqhayi achieves this.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STUDY OF THE PLOT STRUCTURE OF

ITYALA LAMAWELE

This chapter is aimed at studying the plot structure of Mqhayi's Ityala Lamawele and finding out if it does or does not conform to the generally accepted literary conventions. The result should not be taken to mean that this is the sole determinant which we are going to use in assessing the success or the failure of Ityala Lamawele. In chapter five we are going to deal with the traditional setting and this will help us see the novel as a totality instead of selecting certain aspects. Its conformity or non-conformity to these generally accepted conventions will be examined to see if it has any socio-political implications.

The analysis of plot construction may not appear to have much to do with socio-political undercurrents but in Pereyre's terms a writer's deliberate deviation from the accepted norms may be a powerful political statement¹. This point is taken further by Mutloatse (1985:5) who argues that the conformity of African literature to the western literary standards is like being "told how to re-live our feelings". What Mutloatse is saying here is that the African people must not behave like people who do not have their own history and culture. They must not judge

1 Pereyre. J. A. 1984 The Poetry of Commitment in South Africa pp 40-41.

themselves according to other people's standards. This can be considered as a political statement. Ngugi sees the application of western literary standards to African literatures as a way of saying African people had no literature of their own. He (Ngugi) (1986:78) goes further to say:

Language; plot ... features of oral narrative ... could never hold the attention of my ... reader for long ... Content is ultimately the arbiter of form ... So the most important thing was to go for the subject matter which had the complexity and the challenge of their everyday struggle.

Mutloatse (1985:5) in defence of deliberate deviation from the accepted norms, states:

We are going to experiment and probe and not give a damn what the critics have to say. Because we are in search of our true selves - undergoing self-discovery as a people.

The above quotation implies that Black people have lost their dignity and humanity through the acceptance of the Western literary conventions and values which were imposed on them. They are not judging themselves according to their own standards, but according to foreign standards. This action can be interpreted as a confirmation of their inferiority. For this reason Mutloatse feels that if people write as they feel, that can be seen as a way of breaking away from the shackles of perpetual subordination. This point is further stressed by Brown in Chapman (1982: 51) when he writes about African literature :

In spite of the non-literary nature of the source of its inspiration, the Africanization of African literature and criticism has become a significant literary event, and the intrusion of *nationalist motives* (my emphasis) into literary theory and criticism has had a wholesome effect on the development of literary tradition because it rested on the sound principle that a virile tradition can be created only by a return to indigenous sources.

It is with this argument in mind that we are treating the plot structure of Ityala Lamawele. Mqhayi appears to be taking an ideological stance. He does not want to accept the western conventions. He seems to be suggesting that there are two competing ideologies, namely what Ngugi terms the 'authorial ideology' and the 'aesthetic ideology', and he is projecting his own ideological stance. We shall now look at the plot structure of Ityala Lamawele and try to bring out the socio-political undercurrents.

In the current debate on African literature and how it should be assessed, some African critics like Kunene, Brown and others are of the opinion that African literatures must not be forced into the existing literary conventions. The argument advanced here is that these literary conventions were and still are based on European literature. This poses a problem when one has to force another literature into such conventions because the origins of the two literatures are not the same. Kunene (1989:4) commenting on these literary conventions and African literature states:

... I believe one can begin to see the emergence of a new methodology suited to the analysis of works written in African languages. The interesting thing about this methodology is that it comes out of the literature itself, and is not imposed from outside. It is the result of a process of discovery set in motion by the conviction that these literatures have inherent in them their own defining features.

Kunene seems to suggest that it is unfair not to recognise the Africanness of literature written in African languages. He is advocating a new methodology which will emanate from the literature itself. He appears to be fighting the imposition of the literary conventions. If we consider Kunene's statement then we are bound to agree that he is admitting that the two literatures, that is, English and African literatures are different. Our main task must be to find where this difference lies - in the content or in the structure - and what the implications are.

2.1 An evaluation of the plot structure of Ityala Lamawele

My aim in this section is to evaluate the plot structure of Ityala Lamawele and find out if it conforms or does not conform to the generally accepted conventions. If it does not conform an attempt will be made to probe on to the causes which led to its non-conformity.

The story in Ityala Lamawele starts *in medias res*. On the very first page we are introduced to Wele who lays a charge against his twin brother, Babini. We know from

the very outset that there is a 'conflict' between the twin brothers which has reached serious proportions already. Wele states:

Esi Silimela sesesitatu, nkosi, ndiyisa lendawo ku Lucangwana (p4)

This is the third year, sir, that I have been taking this matter to Lucangwana.

The whole of chapter one is acted out. The trial, which adheres to a strict routine, is dramatized in the form of dialogue. It is within the scope of this dissertation to look at the effect of the dialogue between Wele, the plaintiff, and Ntentema, the one who urges him to say more about the nature of the case. As Ntentema is not directly involved in the lawsuit, we think it will be of interest to look at the contribution of the dialogue to the development of plot. Whether this dialogue has a negative or a positive contribution that will be brought out at a later stage. The case is between the twin brothers. Ntentema is only trying to get facts from Wele about the case. He is neither offering opposition nor siding with Wele. There is nothing which Ntentema wants to gain. He is only interested in knowing the details about the dispute. He wants to weigh facts. That Ntentema is not part of the dispute is clearly seen in his actions. After cross questioning Wele, he turns away and leaves. Fuzile takes over and urges Wele to tell them more about the case. He too, does not contribute to the development of the plot because he is not made an essential part of it. He is only given a peripheral role to play.

For the purposes of this study the clash between the two brothers will be termed a dispute rather than a conflict as it does not fit the definition of conflict, there being nothing at stake to which the brothers have an equal claim. Wele is just using this claim to make his case strong. The real issue is the different interpretations the two brothers give to the same customs and traditions. After the verdict Wele states that he was not interested in seniority. He took the trouble to take his brother to court because he wanted to avert the misfortunes which were going to befall his family.

The nature of the dispute in Ityala Lamawele is that Wele and Babini do not have the same goal. Babini is genuine in his claim for seniority whereas Wele is not interested in seniority. He is mainly concerned with the smooth running of his family affairs. The dispute takes shape when Wele, who is portrayed as a traditional character acquires an extra dimension of dynamism. He has become a champion of tradition against this unfamiliar and strange behaviour of his brother. Mqhayi (1931:50) writes.

Ute u Wele yena wayenqanda ihlahla elaliza
kuwela intsapo ka Vuyisile, kuba umninimzi
wayedungudele; ngoku ebuyileyo akazi ukuba
usengubanina yena.

Wele said he had been trying to prevent a quarrel which could have broken out in Vuyisile's family, because the owner of the house had abandoned home; however, now that he had come back he did not know what role he could play.

This is one of the reasons why the plot does not grow and develop according to the western conventions. The dispute has taken the place of a conflict. This is further complicated by the characters, who are supposed to be the supporters of the litigants, not playing an active role in developing the plot. They are just mentioned in the book and we hardly know what their contribution in the development of the dispute before action starts at Hintsa's court is. The characters in the book are very simple and not at all dramatically interesting. There is no direct contact between the litigants and their supporters which can influence the outcome of the story. Pekesa, who supports Babini, does not play an active role. He does not advise Babini on how to present his case. Nor does he participate actively in the dispute. Pekesa seems to be a sympathiser rather than a supporter of Babini. He does not influence the outcome of the story. In short, his presence is not felt. He seems to have his own interest in the lawsuit and to be fighting his own battle under the pretext of being Babini's supporter.

On the surface the dispute in Ityala Lamawe appears to be limited to the two characters who are directly involved in it. On another level one can argue that this dispute also involves the ancestors. The dispute seems to be controlled because there is the middle man, the judiciary. Wele and Babini are not as forceful as the characters in Jordan's Inggumbo Yeminyanya, for instance, who are genuinely fighting for a crown and both

contending parties want to gain it. In Ityala Lamawele the contending parties are not fighting for the same thing. Wele is not interested in seniority whereas Babini is fighting tooth and nail trying to defend his seniority.

The stages of development in the plot of Ityala Lamawele cannot be traced. The plot has to develop and its development must be in stages. In the opening pages we expect the introduction of what is going to take place in the book. This comes in the form of the exposition. From there we should get the rise and development where more characters are introduced and the story becomes more complicated. These stages must move until the last one which is the conclusion. But such stages are lacking in Ityala Lamawele. This lack of the developmental stages in Mghayi's plot can be attributed to the lack of the element of causality in most of the incidents that take place in the book. There is no cause and effect connection. The plot in Mghayi's novel barely goes beyond a narrative of events, it simply tells a story and it should be noted that, although the plot has no climax, the narratives in the story have peaks which serve as threads to keep the story together. There is a delegation which is sent to Lucangwana to fetch him, at the request of Hintsa, the paramount chief. When he arrives, they hold a secret meeting which leaves the reader as ignorant as before because the agenda and the outcome of the meeting are kept a secret. The point here seems to be that

Mqhayi's Ityala Lamawele is putting more emphasis on the confidentiality of traditional people.

Comparing A.C. Jordan's novel Inggumbo Yeminyanya with Ityala Lamawele, Riordan (1961: 56) states:

Inggumbo Yeminyanya is an extremely well planned novel. The central structure is clean like the sculptured figure of a cheetah...There are no bypaths leading nowhere as in Ityala Lamawele by Mqhayi.

If Riordan uses the western standards to assess Mqhayi's novel then I agree with him when he says Ityala Lamawele teems with bypaths which lead nowhere. They are non-essential incidents because they neither influence nor change the outcome of the story. They do not contribute to the development of the plot in the book and are not followed up to produce the desired effect. For instance, we are introduced to two characters, Kosani and Dliisa, who ride past the Great Place on horseback. They interrupt the court hearing by questioning Wele not even stopping to listen properly to his reply. In terms of what Riordan says, this incident does not, in the least, contribute to the development of the plot. This rather informal contribution on the part of Kosani and Dliisa seems to be an endeavour by Mqhayi to show the democratic manner in which traditional legal procedure was handled.

Singiswa, Teyase and Yiliwe, the midwives at the birth of the twins, are summoned to appear before the court as witnesses. The reader expects new things to unfold and

change the course of the court hearing but in their evidence they just state facts flatly as they were when the twins were born. They narrate a story which has no cause and effect connection. Such a story cannot enhance the plot. They do not take sides with either of the twins. In their evidence they repeat all that has been said by Wele except the details about the hardship the twins' mother experienced during labour. Although this is the case, their utterances are very important because they add to the cumulative effect of the minute details that are given.

The midwives also reported how Teyase performed the small finger cutting ritual. This seems to be crucial and we expect the mentioning of it to influence the outcome of the story but Mqhayi does not develop this point and it becomes one of the 'bypaths which lead nowhere'.

Conflict, which is the pillar of a plot is not portrayed in Mqhayi's Ityala Lamawele. Rather what is portrayed is the handling of a dispute by a traditional court. This has affected his plot structure if we assess his book using the generally accepted conventions. It is interesting to note that although Mqhayi has stated that he was writing a Xhosa story, his book is classified as a novel. Another point of interest is that Ityala Lamawele seems to have something in it which is not found in many novels. The story is not held together by incidents but seems to be held together by what the characters say, their utterances.

Ityala Lamawele is more of a dramatized documentary of an aspect of Xhosa life, namely, the judicial system. The two major characters, Wele and Babini are only used for introducing the dispute. The emphasis is not laid on them so that the plot can develop. Rather, Mqhayi pays more attention to the procedures followed in traditional courts and the manner in which the matter is resolved. This seems to have been the trend with all the early writers who were not fiction writers in the true sense of the word. Their idea was rather to address the readers with the aim of defending their cultural position. With reference to Ityala Lamawele Mqhayi seems to be addressing a particular readership, in order to prove the level of civilization which the Xhosa people had reached as early as Phalo's time. This becomes very clear when one considers Majeke's statement that his father helped resolve a complicated case when people were faced with queens and no one knew which one was to be recognized as the one to bear an heir. These are some of the points which make the plot structure in Ityala Lamawele deviant because they hinder its development according to the conventional standards.

The mismatching of the litigants also stunts the development of the plot. Wele's physical appearance is in line with his claim. He is tall, hefty and bearded. He also appears to be more stable minded than Babini. On the other hand, Babini is thin, short and has no beard. Wele

outwits Babini in almost all respects. When they were still young boys Babini could not trap birds which shows a lack of survival skills. Wele is more responsible and mature, both physically and mentally than Babini.

Wele looks after the family as well as the cattle of the family. He was the first one to receive all the necessary customs like the cutting of the small finger and he was circumcised before his brother. All these are valid reasons for Wele's claim. Traditionally, the order of things, especially those which centred around certain beliefs, was very important. For instance, if one takes circumcision, there is more to it than taking the boys to the lodge. It is a religious ceremony. It brings together all the clan members, both dead and alive. Babini's claim is that he was the first one to be born. Mqhayi (1931:28) writes:

... kuti ukusonjululwa kwabo bantu bavele ngalanga linye, kujongwe lowo upume tanci etangeni kunina.

... When resolving an issue between those people born on the same day, we consider the one who was born first.

Wele is stronger than Babini and this mismatch has affected what was supposed to be the conflict which in turn has affected the plot. If the conflict is not well developed, obviously the plot will be affected because conflict is the pillar of a plot and without the plot there will be no novel. Dibell (1988:10) takes the above point further in arguing that:

... any story needs to be founded on an effective and strongly felt-conflict, in which the opposing forces - whether people, ideas, attitudes, or a mix - are at least fairly evenly matched, enough so that the final outcome is in doubt.

Mqhayi's story is not based on a strongly felt conflict because the contending parties are not aiming at attaining the same goal. They have different motives and objectives. Wele is not contesting seniority but rather he uses the claim to seniority as a vehicle to get his brother to execute his duties as a senior male in the family. He wants him to take up his responsibility. The way in which this dispute is presented does not obscure the final outcome. It becomes clear from the early stages in the book that Wele is going to achieve his goal. His arguments show that he will succeed in his intentions. Indeed, he manages to get his brother to take up his responsibility as a senior male in the family. After the verdict we notice a drastic change in Babini's behaviour. That spells victory for Wele. He attains his goal which is not what Babini has been defending all along.

Mqhayi appears to be concentrating too much on the social stratification. He grades his characters and slots them in social levels. Each level has a particular role to play and the roles are determined by the participant's level. The exposition and portrayal of Mqhayi's characters emphasize the hierarchy rather than developing the plot. In African literatures, especially those written in the vernacular languages, social structure is

seldom dealt with in an abstract manner but will usually have reference to real life situations. Such literatures often have an unmistakable relevance to one's everyday life. This could be doubly true in the case of S.E.K. Mqhayi in the sense that his literature is a kind of protest literature. In Ityala Lamawele Hintsa, who is the paramount chief, is much respected. The respect shown to him is genuine in the sense that people know that he is a hereditary chief. He is born into that level. The schematic representation of this hierarchy is as follows:

Hintsa (Khulile)	5.
Lucangwana	4.
Mxhuma etc	3.
Teyase & Yiliwe etc	2.
Kosani, Ntentema	
Dlisa, Fuzile etc	1.

2.2 Interpretation of the hierarchy.

In level one, we get the *mobile vulgus*. This level comprises ordinary men who hold no titles or do not have political positions. They belong to this level by virtue of their birth. Although a man can be in level one, that does not mean that he will remain in that level for the rest of his life. He can work himself up to a higher level. A level to which an individual belongs is determined by his social status and other related factors, such as birth, to be discussed under the title:

Factors which determine the position of an individual in the society.

Singiswa, Teyase and Yiliwe, the midwives, are in level two. Their position and participation is determined by those participants who are in level one. The evidence is incomplete without the evidence of the midwives. Each group complements the other. Their role is determined by the inadequacy on the part of the participants who are in level one. Singiswa, Yiliwe and Teyase are given higher status by virtue of their having first hand information about the birth of the twins. In this case the status is situational. Should the situation change, they may be in another level, depending on the skills they have in that particular situation.

In level three we get Mxhuma and the other counsellors. They have a higher status mainly because they are the king's counsellors. For one to be chosen as a counsellor one would certainly have to show certain talents and some experience in the running of the affairs of the great place.

Lucangwana is in level four of the hierarchy. His position is hereditary. He is a junior chief and he will always occupy that level. He may determine another person's role. If he wants to elevate the status of one participant, he can do so but that participant cannot occupy a rung higher than his.

In the uppermost rung of this hierarchy we get Hintsa who is the paramount chief. On this rung we also get Khulile although he does not belong to that level. All the people who are in that level are people who are born into it. That level is hereditary. By placing Khulile on such a high social rung, Mqhayi here seems to be proving that the Xhosa judiciary was not a rigid one. People with special skills were allowed to display those skills irrespective of their social status. Khulile has had his status elevated because of his wisdom. That does not mean he will remain there forever. As soon as he has played his role, he will have to go back to his proper position in the hierarchy.

2.2.1. Factors which determine the position of an individual in the society

There are various factors which determine the position of an individual in the hierarchy. Some of those factors are:

- (i) Birth: A person is born into a particular level, for example, Hintsa and Lucangwana. Their positions are hereditary. By virtue of their birth they take senior positions.
- (ii) Acquired: Some of the positions are acquired. Mxhuma's position has moved up simply because of his involvement in civic matters and his association with Hintsa.
- (iii) Situation: Teyase, Singiswa and Yiliwe's positions are determined by those people of level one. The

failure of those in level one has elevated the status of Teyase Singiswa and Yiliwe. They appear as crucial witnesses. From the hierarchy we gather that gender does not exclude some from playing a role.

- (iv) Possession of skills: Possession of special skills exalts one to a higher rung on a social ladder. Khulile holds no office but Hintsisa thinks of him as the only person who can resolve the dispute between the twin brothers.

The sort of stratification which exists among the Xhosa people is not a rigid one yet there is order in the way in which things are done. The hierarchy proves that those who have got authority have got freedom to exercise that authority for the benefit of the society in general. There are people who are born into certain levels and those people cannot be put in any other level. Others can move up but even there they cannot be above certain levels no matter how hard they try to work themselves up. Khulile is a typical example. He shows that a person can move right up to the top for a specified period. He has been put there for him to be able to show his skills in solving the problem. After the case has been resolved, he goes back to his original level.

2.2.2 The handling of characters

Mqhayi's handling of characters is rather loose. This is also stated by Jordan (1973:100) when he notes:

Mqhayi is not a great creator of individual characters. Hardly any character stands out in this story and consequently the impression left in the reader's mind is this collective dignity and refinement of the chief and his subjects.

The way in which Mqhayi handles his characters is more or less the same as the way in which characters in folklore are handled. As far as he is concerned, it would appear that it is not absolutely crucial to work with the same characters throughout the story. There are those key characters which cannot be replaced and there are also those which can be replaced without affecting the story adversely. The rationale behind this methodology seems to be that characters per se are subordinate to ideas or issues. However, this does not mean that all characters can be exchanged for new ones. Core characters will always be retained while peripheral ones can either be marginalized or dropped completely. The characters who are marginalized or dropped in the course of the story, often leave traces of their apparent limited participation in the story. Those traces are often the very issues or ideas that are pertinent in the book. If we take Dliisa and Kosani we shall see that they are used as devices for repeating and re-affirming what has been said. There is no relationship between the characters and the other aspects of the novel. The characters do not contribute to the development of the plot because there is no thread which joins them to the plot. Instead of portraying and revealing his characters, Mqhayi emphasizes the closeness and the relations between them.

They all know one another and they call one another by clan names. Mqhayi's characters are called by different names. Fuzile is also called umNgqosini, Vuyisile umNzothwa, Kosani umVala, Dlisa umGora, Qavile umVulane, Gqomo umBamba, Wisizwi umTshonyane of Khawuta, Mancapha umQocwa and Roloma umCethe.

Mqhayi also emphasizes confidentiality in his characters. He shows how secretive traditional Xhosa people were. Mqhayi (1931:7) puts it this way:

Yaza nayo yabukatula apo ebotwe ubusuku ikunye noNgokoma um-Pemvu noMalinga um-Ngwevu, amadoda abesaziwa ngokugcina ilwimi zawo kulo lonke ikomkulu.

And he (the king) spent the greater part of the night at the palace with Ngokoma of the Mpemvu clan and Malinga of the Ngwevu clan, men who were renowned in the whole Great Place for controlling their tongues (secrecy).

Mqhayi also takes the emphasis on confidentiality further and puts the delegation sent to Lucangwana's place to the test. The delegation arrives at a group of men who are eating meat. These men enquire about the progress that has been made concerning the lawsuit of the twins. The delegation denies that there is such a case, saying they have never heard of it.

It is evident that Mqhayi is not concerned with portraying characters. His main concern is the dramatization of a particular situation with the aim of

conveying a message. Here, he is showing the involvement of the menfolk in civic matters and how such men behave.

The design of the story in Mqhayi's book is not held together by incidents which are interwoven but rather by the sequence of events which lack cause and effect connection. The ordering of the story emanates from outside. Things do not develop or emanate from the story and spread, instead external factors shape the story and this ordering is culturally determined. His main idea seems to be to put Xhosa culture at par with other cultures. This, he states in his preface.

Inteto nemikwa yesi Xosa iya itshona
ngokutshona ngenxa ye-Lizwi nokanyo olukoyo,
oluze nezizwe zase Ntshonalanga...

La ke ngamazwembezwembe okuzama ukuxatalaza
kulomsinga uzakutshayela isizwe sipela.
(1931:V)

The Xhosa language and custom are gradually disappearing because of Christianity and civilization which are present, brought by western nations...These, therefore, are genuine efforts to try and resist this current which is going to sweep away the whole nation.

Mqhayi got the idea of writing about the twins from the Bible. A similar story is found in the Bible and it reads:

When the time came for her to give birth, it was discovered that she was going to have twins. While she was in labour, one of them put out an arm; the midwife caught it, tied a red thread around it, and said, "This one was born first". But he pulled his arm back, and his brother was born first (Gen: 38,27-29)

The story in Ityala Lamawele is similar to the one above. We find Wele putting out his hand and the midwife cutting the small finger. Having performed this ritual, Wele pulls his hand back and his brother, Babini, comes out first.

That Mqhayi is emphasizing the importance of cultural issues is clearly seen when Babini mends his ways. In his evidence Wele states that the quarrel between him and his brother started after the death of their father. This immediately arouses some questions in Mxhuma's mind. Mqhayi (1931:11) allows Mxhuma to react in this fashion:

Lomzi wawungakuzwanga na? Utiweni ukukuzwa kwawo?

Was the lamentation ceremony not performed for this home? How was it performed?

Mxhuma's question suggests that the cause of the dispute between the twin brothers was the omission of the lamentation ceremony. This ceremony is two-fold. It serves:

- (i) to incorporate the dead member into the ancestral world so that he can function together with them and protect the living descendants against misfortunes.
- (ii) to announce and empower the senior son to take charge of the family responsibilities. He is given the right to run the family and administer its

affairs.

About the relationship between the living and the dead Mugo (1978:32) writes:

The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors. There was coming and going between them, especially at festivals and also when an old man died, because an old man was very close to the ancestors...the community collectively draws its life rhythm from this union ... It is very vital that every individual plays his full part in this community of co-ordinates and wholes, that he maintain order, peace and cohesion all round him, all the time, because a disruption in any sector might mean a discontinuation of a part of life. (Emphasis mine).

Mqhayi seems to have been aiming at showing the relevance of his culture in keeping people in harmony. This point is supported by a change in Babini's behaviour after Hintsa had made an undertaking to perform the lamentation ceremony. We notice a change even before the ceremony is performed. This is bound to affect the plot structure because he has to concentrate on events which will convince the other nations that Xhosa culture was, indeed, at an advanced stage.

2.2.3 The ordering of events

The movement of the story in Mqhayi's book is iterative. He concentrates on the chronological sequence of events which are often repeated. This iterative movement has affected the plot structure. It limits the ground for the

development of plot. Wele, for instance, goes to the Great Place to lay a charge against his brother, Babini. He gives his side of the story. In chapter two he repeats it. In chapter three the midwives confirm what has been said already by Wele. In chapter four both twins are asked to start from scratch and present their case.

Although there are new facts uncovered at each hearing, Mqhayi does not follow them up. We do understand this 'flaw' because Mqhayi states clearly his intention in his preface. He says that his aim is to show the amount of trouble and time spent by the Xhosa people when dealing with judicial issues.

In his 1931 version Mqhayi gives us what amounts to stage directions. He (Mqhayi) (1931:vii) writes:

INKUNDLA.

Elityala lalitetwa e Gcuwa, kulendawo
inedolopu kanye ngenx'engase mpumalanga
ezibukweni. Apo yayikona i-Nkundla ya
Komkulu.

UKUMKANI.

U-Kumkani owayeliteta yayingu Hintsa:

THE COURT

The case was heard at Butterworth, where the town is today, exactly on the eastern side of the ford. That is where the court of the Great Place was.

THE PARAMOUNT CHIEF

The paramount chief who presided was
Hintsa:

When one analyses the information given by Mqhayi in his preface, one is inclined to conclude that Mqhayi was not writing fiction as such but was trying to show how conversant the Xhosa people were with their cultural and judicial issues.

Another factor which may have contributed to the type of plot structure found in Ityala Lamawele is the one connected with the epoch during which the book was written. Ityala Lamawele was first published in 1914. Mqhayi's original text was a Xhosa allegory. Most Xhosa writers were not conversant with the art of writing fiction because most of the books available in the vernacular languages were translations from English and passages from the Bible. Besides that the missionaries who owned the printing presses were against anything which had to do with Xhosa culture because they viewed it as promoting pagan practices. Another factor which might have contributed to this plot structure is the influence of Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress which appeared in Xhosa under the title Uhambo Lomhambi which was a translation by Tiyo Soga and his son. Ityala Lamawele was Mqhayi's first serious publication in book form. In 1907, he published USamson which on the surface was reminiscent of the Biblical story of Samson and Delilah. Besides that he was, for a long time, involved in the writing of articles in newspapers.

2.3 Some observation

Haralambos and Heald (1983:406) define deviant as follows:

In everyday language to deviate means to stray from an accepted path... Thus deviance consists of those acts which do not follow the norms and expectations of a particular social group. Deviance may be positively sanctioned (rewarded), negatively sanctioned (punished), or simply accepted without reward or punishment.

Giddens (1989: 118) gives his definition of deviance as follows:

Deviance may be defined as non-conformity to a given norm, or set of norms, which are accepted by a significant number of people in a community or society.

Although the two definitions given seem to be more sociological, they can be applied to literature as long as one will bear in mind that what is said to be the case in society or community should now apply to literature. Deviant, therefore, is not used in a sociological sense, with a bad connotation, but rather to mean that this particular plot does not conform to existing literary conventions without any reference to aesthetics. Haralambos' definition has shown that some of the deviant behaviour can be positively sanctioned. It is with this

positive sanction in mind that we shall look at Mqhayi's plot.

The problem that we seem to be faced with in Mqhayi's plot is not a technical one. It is a cultural problem and an ideological position that he takes in his work. For any student to understand Mqhayi's works, that student must read his works against his culture and politics of his time. In Ityala Lamawele Mqhayi has tried to get away from mission school writing. Although this is the case, he did not involve himself with recreating the oral literature. Instead he appears to be drawing heavily from, and working closely with, oral sources of literature

In terms of the Western conventions, Mqhayi's plot appears to be weak and perhaps unconvincing, but one could also take an alternative route of assessing the success or failure of his unconventional structural design. Sometimes the element of historicity appears to be of paramount importance in Mqhayi's writing. This element, sometimes, could be interpreted by some as obscuring, rather than clarifying, issues. Brown in Chapman (1982:50) states that:

... it is essential that the critic be as conversant as possible with the traditions, customs, mythology and art, in short the culture, of the community from which the writer comes.

He further goes on to say:

critical standards should not predate the literature they are attempting to assess; they should, as far as possible, grow out of that literature.

2.4 Conclusion

The plot structure of Ityala Lamawele can be perceived as weak and that can mean failure on the part of the author if we were to use contemporary literary conventions. If we take heed of Brown's (1982:50) call to allow the critical standards to grow out of the literature itself, then we would have a totally different interpretation of Mqhayi's novel. These then are the reasons that have led us to the conclusion that Mqhayi's plot structure is deviant as discussed in earlier paragraph on page 65.

The rigidity of the critics has discouraged many writers from following Mqhayi's style. This rigidity is even stronger among those who wrote immediately after him. It is only in recent times, with the growth of what may be loosely termed 'going native' that there is a move towards following Mqhayi's style. Current literary debate suggests that the present literary conventions should not be used for assessing literatures written in African languages. This in turn, suggests a new approach to the study of African literature. The rejection of the literary conventions is due to the fact that such conventions tend to predate rather than assess the literatures in African languages.

It is striking to note that although the plot structure of Ityala Lamawele does not conform to the conventions, the story has not lost its impact. It is still held together by other devices which Mqhayi has used. This point is further taken up in chapter five which deals with the traditional setting.

The impact of the story appears to be sustained by Mqhayi's narrative technique. He is consistent in the way in which he tells his story and there is nowhere in the book where he has tried to force his work into the existing literary conventions. This has prevented him jumping from one style to the other. With this 'deviant' plot structure Mqhayi seems to be saying Black people should not try to judge themselves using western standards as a criterion. In the treatment of his characters, Mqhayi does not concentrate on individuals. He treats them as a group. This spills over to the actions of these characters. The utterances of individual characters are not that important. They get their importance when they are considered collectively. Through this, he appears to be advocating the solidarity of the group and at the same time showing that collective effort can produce more fruit than the individual efforts.

CHAPTER THREE

ITYALA LAMAWELE AS AN EXTENDED

METAPHOR

In this chapter I shall argue that Ityala Lamawele can be interpreted as an extended metaphor. On the surface Ityala Lamawele seems to be dealing with a lawsuit between Wele and Babini. On a metaphorical level it may be taken to be a refutation and rejection of the misconceptions the missionaries and colonialists had about the Black people. Kuse (1977: 224) expresses a similar view when he writes:

On the surface there is the contest between Wele (Twin) and Babini (They-are-two). On a deeper level there is an intention to assert Xhosa values, especially in matters of law, over against European values.

Ityala Lamawele can be loosely said to be in an 'allegorical' mode. It is in this sense that I propose to refer to it as an extended metaphor. In his autobiography Mqhayi states that the first edition of Ityala lamawele was in an allegorical mode. If one looks at what Mqhayi calls the 'allegory', one is inclined to accept the term with some reservations. The allegory that Mqhayi refers to is closely related to the animal stories in folk tales. In folk tales the allegory reflects society indirectly and in this dissertation the term is used with some limitations.

There is reference to the Biblical story of Thammar's twins. The whole story is used as a tool to address the socio-political issues which involve the battle between Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism. Mqhayi does that rather in a manner of a praise poet or a story teller. Whites and Blacks are not put side by side to demonstrate the conflict between the two groups. Rather, Mqhayi reports their attitudes and distorted ideas about the Xhosa culture and then proceeds to put the case of the African by means of this story. The quotation from the Bible indicates its 'allegorical' features and ironically too, in attacking the missionaries and their attitudes, he cites the story from the Bible. From the novel it becomes quite clear that Mqhayi does not subscribe to radical Afrocentrism and he is able to see similarities between some practices of the Xhosa and those of the Jews from the Bible. While he is attacking the arrogance of Western people he is still able to accommodate the good that can be used to enrich his own culture.

Ityala Lamawele may be seen as Mqhayi's response to the western nation's arrogance in viewing themselves as the initiators of history and the transporters of culture and civilization to Black people. For this reason, Ityala Lamawele cannot be seen as a free spontaneous expression but rather as an argument with the 'civilizers'. That Ityala Lamawele is an argument can be seen in the way in which the first chapter of the novel is written. The whole of chapter one is in the form of a dialogue with no reported speech except what amounts to the stage

directions given by the author. Wele and Ntentema, the one who urges him to speak out, are involved in a dialogue. This dialogue is disturbed when we get to what appear to be the stage directions telling us about the appearance of Kosani and Dliisa.

In his introduction, Mqhayi (1931: V) writes

Ndizama nokubonisa ukuba inkosi asinguyena
mgqibi wezinto yedwa, njengoko izizwe zona ziba
kunjalo.

I am also trying to illustrate that the king is not the sole decision-maker, as foreigners consider him to be.

The above quotation also suggests that this novel is an argument with the Western nations. This is made clear by Mqhayi when he says he is trying to prove to the foreigners, who also happen to be the conquerors, that the king is not the sole decision-maker. The foreigners referred to in this case are the Western nations.

He is trying to show that Black people were as organized as any civilized nation. He goes even further to illustrate the level of civilization the Black people had attained. He achieves this by portraying his characters as experts in traditional legal system. The prime thing in Xhosa traditional courts is to reach consensus. That seems to be part of his argument.

Dathorne (1976:44) observes:

Although from the onset Mqhayi tried to get away from mission-school writing, he did not involve himself with recreating the oral literature. Instead he worked fairly closely with oral sources (in addition to indigenous idioms, his work is full of the precision of one directed but not hamstrung by a tradition) and his story emerges as another exercise in the attempt to establish individuality.

3.1 The missionaries and the Xhosa people

When the missionaries arrived in South Africa, they considered Black people as being very primitive. An article which appeared in "Ikhwezi", August, 1844, can throw some light on what the missionaries thought of Blacks. It reads:

The missionaries are all helping to compose this (journal) because they strongly desire that the Xhosa people acquire knowledge and wisdom...[M]any Xhosa are beginning to spread enlightenment through learning. Their wisdom is now but little, but it is growing ... This journal will bring enlightenment to you Xhosa, it will tell you of Jesus Christ who is the sun of goodness.

Andrzjewski et. al. (1985:547) quote another missionary as having said:

... one member of the Glasgow Missionary Society, for example, spoke of "barbarous customs of the Bantu," and added: " Yet they are a fine race of people and nothing but religion and civilization are wanting to exalt them in the scale of being - to raise them to the true dignity of human nature.

These quotations show the conceptions the missionaries had about the Xhosa people. To them, the Xhosa were a

stage behind in the line of evolution. They were not seen as being the same as their White counterparts.

Mqhayi is trying to assert that it was nonsense for a group of people, namely the Christian missionaries and western "civilizers", to have gone to the Xhosa people and elsewhere, imagining that they were in a position to carry salvation to anyone by introducing another civilization and religion. The Xhosa people had a civilization just as self-sufficient and as "faulty" as any other as is shown by the dispute between the twin brothers. Mqhayi has succeeded in portraying a perfect traditional legal system and at the same time has exposed some weaknesses on the part of the community. He portrays the omission of the lamentation ceremony as the cause of the lawsuit of the twins.

Mqhayi is very blatant in his attack of the method which the missionaries employed to bring Christianity and civilization to Black people. (vide p. 60 of this dissertation)

He sees Christianity and civilization as being designed to promote the interests of the western nations and their culture at the expense of the Black people. The implication here is that the culture of the Xhosa people will be destroyed, and should people lose their culture, they will lose their dignity as well which is the core of their existence. It will be of interest to note that as early as 1906 Rubusana had already published an anthology

entitled Zemk' Iinkomo Magwalandini (There goes your heritage; you cowards). The title of the anthology comes from a popular slogan among the Xhosa speaking people. It is usually shouted if there is something which is threatening the culture of the people. It is associated with invasions. If the people are invaded and conquered, they know that they will have to go and serve under a new chief who would not allow them to practise their customs. They will have to accept the culture of their conquerors. Rubusana was warning the Black people about this assimilation of a new culture. He could foresee the danger of people losing their culture and accepting a new culture which they hardly knew.

To show his resistance Mqhayi uses the term ukuxhathalaza (vide p. 60 of this dissertation) which has some reference to a form of resistance, some protest. The protest in this case is against the conquerors. This quotation suggests that the book is not dealing with the lawsuit between the twin brothers *per se*. The twins are used to strengthen the 'allegorical' mode of the novel. Mqhayi's suggestion here is that the battle is between the conquerors and those being conquered.

Writing about people and culture, Leshoai, in Chapman (1982:56) observes:

In 1962 when the Ministry of National Culture and Youth was introduced, President Julius Nyerere explained to Parliament that the reason for this action was based on the belief that the spirit of any nation was its culture, that a country which lacked its own culture was no

more than a collection of people without the spirit which makes them a nation.

Nyerere, here, views culture as an important element which moulds a nation. He sees it as a binding force. A nation which has no culture of its own is not regarded as a nation. In his novel, Mqhayi is fighting this breaking up of people through imposing another culture on them. He does not want the Xhosa people to abandon their culture. He attempts to achieve this by showing the Xhosa people how advanced their culture is. The way in which he has treated the clash between the twin brothers leaves no doubt that Xhosa culture is as good as any other. In Mqhayi's mind, Christianity and civilization are tools which the western nations use in order to break the national pride of those on whom Christianity and civilization are imposed.

He is also trying to show how the Xhosa people lived before they were conquered by the western nations. The Xhosa nation is portrayed as having all the basic institutions necessary for the survival of a nation. In his book he portrays that there is a "government" run by wise and responsible men who are sensitive to confidentiality - counsellors - and a code of law, although unwritten, by which to govern and whose justice is executed without discrimination. That the execution of justice was without discrimination was clearly shown when Hintsa fined Babini for not reporting the birth of his son. For the greater part of the book Babini is portrayed as an irresponsible young man. After Hintsa had passed the verdict, Babini mends his ways and works very hard to

improve the image of his home. As a result of his mending his ways, Hintsa presented him with cattle calling him an obedient young man. He became the favourite of the Great Place. When he failed to report the birth of his son, Hintsa did not treat him as a favourite. He made him pay the fine which everybody else pays for the same offence.

3.1.1 The concept of traditional religion

Kenyatta (1938:99) writes the following about the indigenous institutions:

Religion is part and parcel of life, as is education, for in most traditional African societies education begins at the time of birth and ends with death ... there is no special school building ... the homestead is the school.

Mqhayi also shows that the Xhosa people had a form of religion and it was one of the most important institutions. He does this by attributing the dispute between the twin-brothers to an act of omission. When Vuyisile, the father of the twins died, the lamentation ceremony was not performed for him. Although he has used a lamentation ceremony in this case, that does not confine us to this particular ceremony. It could have been any ceremony. The aim is to demonstrate to the conquerors that Black people had a form of religion. The lamentation ceremony is only representative of the many religious practices which were condemned by the western nations, especially the missionaries.

In Xhosa traditional practices, there is this deep-rooted belief that a man's death does not necessarily spell the end of him. Dying is seen as a transition from one stage to another. After death people go to the world hereafter, the ancestral world. Before one can take up one's duties as an ancestor all the necessary rites have to be performed for him. If such rites are not performed then that person will not be able to function as an ancestor. He, therefore, turns his back against his living descendants. Writing about ancestors and sacrifices, Kropf and Godfrey (1915:77) observe:

Should there be illness either of man or beast, and the doctor be called in and say, 'I see, your ancestors are displeased, because you have not rendered them their due,' it was understood that a sacrifice was demanded.

The above view is further reiterated by Mqhayi (1931:11) through Mxhuma when he asks about the holding of the lamentation ceremony.

Mqhayi is trying to show that there is nothing wrong with the twins. The problem lies with the whole community because the person who was supposed to officiate also failed to perform his duty. In this case the person who was supposed to officiate was Hintsa, the paramount chief of the Xhosa. Although the dispute is between the twin brothers, this has become a national concern because almost everybody is involved directly or indirectly.

The lamentation ceremony is a well known custom but it was not performed. The people departed from an important custom, which meant part of their culture was neglected and consequently they had to suffer. This was a form of punishment meted out by the ancestral spirits. Pauw (1975:114) comments on the relationship between the living and the dead. He writes:

In terms of Xhosa tradition one's ancestors are supposed to manifest themselves in the experience of their living kinsmen in various ways. They keep them from dangers or they send misfortunes to express their annoyance about bad behaviour, or to draw attention to the need for ritual to be performed.

The expression of the annoyance of the ancestors is clearly portrayed in Jordan's Inggumbo Yeminyanya. When Thembeke failed to show respect to the totemic snake, inkwakhwa, of the Mpondomise people, she lost her sanity. The anger of the ancestral spirits was not directed to her only but to her husband as well.

To prove that it was a punishment meted out by the ancestral spirits, the relations between the two brothers started becoming cordial again immediately after Hintsa had made an undertaking to hold the lamentation ceremony. Vuyisile's home became a happy one again and there was prosperity. The making of the undertaking is commensurate to reconsidering the Black people's stand in as far as their culture and civilization are concerned. The recognition of their culture by those who oppose it and by the Xhosa people themselves brings them relief.

3.2 Custom and tradition as seen by Xhosa people

Mqhayi also shows the importance of custom in traditional Xhosa society. When Wele was asked to give reasons for what people thought was his claim to be declared a senior twin, he gave the following reasons among others:

(a) that he was the first one to have the rite of cutting the small finger (*ingqithi*) performed on him.

(b) that when they went to the circumcision school, he was the first one to be circumcised. The two reasons were strong points which favoured Wele. Even men who were at the courtyard tended to support Wele because of the above reasons. The blunder made by *ikhankatha* also adds to the nomenclature complexities used in the novel. The name of the junior twin, Wele, (Twin) suggests many and Babini's name (They-are-two) suggests more plurality. The problem of dealing with twins is underlined in the nomenclature. Wele, could be either of the twins without regard to primogeniture. This also applies to Babini. Through this Mqhayi is suggesting that the merger of the two cultures will still show that there are two cultures. The relevance and the effectiveness of the traditional institutions is clearly shown by Mqhayi when he portrays his characters in a manner which shows that they are experts when it comes to traditional legal issues. He achieves this by looking at culture as a gestalt. He shows that the various aspects of culture are interrelated. Each aspect does not form an independent entity. What people learn as children tend to practise

them when they become adults. The same applies to Mqhayi. His upbringing is reflected in his writings.

Because of his upbringing Mqhayi is trying very hard to blend the Christian culture and the traditional culture. This is also evident in his other works. He has a reference to the Scriptures. This is what he is advocating. He wants his people to blend and reconcile Christianity with traditional culture. This becomes evident when one considers the verdict. The twin brothers were told to go home and work together. We are told that for the first time, Babini was seen closing gaps at the cattle kraal. Symbolically, the closing of gaps at the cattle kraal can be taken to mean the restoration of cordial relations with other family members, which in broader terms will mean the coming together of the two cultures without any one of them trying to dominate the other.

Ityala Lamawele portrays traditional culture as being self-sufficient. This is a plea by Mqhayi to his people. He does not want them to lose their culture. He sees the abandonment of traditional culture as an opening that would allow the domination of western culture which is what the conquerors wanted.

The missionaries had their own intentions when they arrived in this part of the world. Although they claimed that they were on a campaign to spread the Word of God and civilise the African people, they had some ulterior

motives. Mqhayi states this in his preface¹. The education introduced by missionaries was not without political motives. It was an agent of docility and pacification. Schools were focal points for the missionary pressure on those aspects of traditional culture which were seen to be obstructing the advance of Christian civilization. Missionary education was a tool aimed at changing the way of life, the national customs and the identity of the Black people. Ashley (1974:201-3) comments about missionary education. He states:

Education was seen as indispensable to the work of conversion. Schools were necessary to teach Africans to read the Bible. Thus functional literacy both in the vernacular, as translations became available, and English, was the aim. As the cultural obstacle to conversion became apparent, education was to be a means whereby pupils were weaned away from the tribal way of life ... (emphasis mine). The Cape Nguni rejected the education that was offered.

The rejection of this education was largely influenced by some Xhosa chiefs. These chiefs recognized the missionaries as agents of the White government which was intent on destroying the culture of the Xhosa people and the Christianity they preached as a threat to traditional customs. This led to some suspicions on the part of the Xhosa people and it also estranged race relations between the two groups.

Majeke (1952:25) gives some of the aims of the missionaries. She observes:

The breakdown of tribalism meant first the removal of the tribal head, chief or chieftainship.

The missionaries came to Africa as people who wanted to help the Africans. Although they postured as people who had brought salvation to a country which they viewed as about to collapse because of its lack of civilisation, it did not take long before the Africans could see that the missionaries were also conquerors. They wanted to destabilise the social organization of Blacks so that it could be easy for them to continue with their conquest.

This point is further reiterated by Opland (1983:259) who notes:

We have seen that early missionaries and some colonial administrators like Sir George Grey wished to break the power of the chiefs in the interest of peace, and we have remarked on the mutual hostility between chiefs and missionaries to what they held to be pagan practices.

The above quotation is also true of Mghayi's novel when one considers its theme. The book deals with the theme of justice. Although the book seems to be dealing with twins, one could also view it from the perspective of Afrocentrism versus Eurocentrism.

From the Opland quotation it becomes clear that the missionaries either looked down upon tribal life or they deliberately criticised the Xhosa culture because they wanted to introduce their own culture. This then could be seen as their strategy for making the Xhosa people feel ashamed of their culture. This is what one may call mental colonisation. The culture of the people who are colonised is presented by the colonisers in a way that makes those people believe that their culture is inferior. The end result will be that the very bearers of that culture will start despising their own culture. This creates an opportunity for the new culture to dominate. Pieterse and Munro (1970:56-57) comment on western culture and African people as follows:

The native (sic) is a clean slate on which anything can be scribbled. He is subjected to a constant barrage of hints that western culture is all in all.

All these quotations have one thing in common - that the missionaries wanted to impose their culture on Black people and to persuade them to abandon their culture for a new one. Mqhayi comes up with a counter to such intentions. He pleads with his people not to abandon their culture. He does this by showing his people that a nation is built on its culture. In this case missionaries are synonymous with the western culture whereas the Black people are synonymous with the traditional culture. A slight shift from the traditional culture can bring misfortune. This is exactly what is happening at

Vuyisile's home. Babini did not allow his paternal uncle, Pekesa, to discuss the holding of the lamentation ceremony and consequently it was not performed. For that reason, the whole community had to suffer, directly or indirectly because of the misunderstanding between Vuyisile's sons.

In the last chapters of Ityala Lamawele, Mqhayi (1931:119) comes out clearly in his attack of the methods of 'civilizing' Blacks. He writes:

Le ndlela ke baqube kakulu ngayo abantu
abamhlope bazigqiba izizwe ngokanyo.

This method (of civilization) was greatly
employed by White people, and they finished
nations with civilization (disintegrated them).

From the above quotation it can be deduced that one of the factors which prompted Mqhayi to write Ityala Lamawele was to make people aware of the crimes the white people were perpetrating. The point seems to be that Mqhayi was not only historically, but also geographically, well placed to observe what was happening around him. The acceptance of western culture meant the abandonment of traditional culture by the Black people. This meant confusion on the part of Black people because they had to experiment on most of the things brought by this new culture and in the process the western nations took advantage of that confusion and dominated. We see Babini's life being 'controlled' by Pekesa who derives pleasure from the confusion which is taking place at Vuyisile's home. This is proved by his statement when he

was trying to stop Babini from going to his home. He was trying to make the rift between the family members even wider than it was before.

The following scholars give the role of the missionaries in conquest. The letter used in front of the scholar's name is used for convenience when making explanations.

A. Majeke (1952:18) writes the following about the method of civilising Blacks:

A (i) The method of Christianization, which involves something more than the simple question of religion. The aim is the destruction of one culture, tribalism and the replacing of it by capitalism.

A (ii) If the rulers can make people believe that they are inferior, wipe out their past history or present it in such a way that they feel, not pride but shame, then they create the conditions that make it easy to dominate the people (1952:NP)

Extracts A (i) and A (ii) show the aims of, and the strategies employed by the White people in order to dominate. They wanted to destroy the culture of the Black people so that the latter could adopt the White man's way of life. It should be noted that the cultural values between these two societies are totally different. Western culture promotes individualism whereas traditional culture discourages it. While it recognizes the existence of the individual, the behaviour pattern of that individual is determined and shaped by the society from which he comes. In relating this to Ityala Lamawele, we find that Babini does as he pleases without regard to how other family members feel about what he is doing. He

is more concerned about his own interests. On the other hand, Wele clings tenaciously to tradition. He believes in the traditional communal life while Babini is very individualistic.

B. Gérard (1971:55) also gives a picture of what was happening in the nineteenth century. He says:

By the end of the nineteenth century, Xhosa chiefs in the Ciskei had seen their authority and their judicial privileges eroded by the setting up of district councils whose members were appointed by the Cape Authorities.

Extract B shows the areas which were targets. The colonialists wanted to destroy the authority and the judicial privileges of chiefs so that the Black people could be left without leaders to give them guidance. In traditional societies a chief was looked upon as the father of the nation and in times of sorrow, people would look up to him for comfort and in times of crises he would give them guidance. The breaking of the authority of chiefs was fertile ground for domination because people had to look up to district councils for leadership. The missionaries were aware of the strong points of the Xhosa people: the powerful role of chiefs - that of keeping the nation together and of guiding people in times of crisis. They knew that their solidarity was embedded in the tribe. They, therefore, decided to break that solidarity. They achieved this by applying the principle of divide and rule. This point is made clear by the misunderstanding which is at Vuyisile's home.

Vuyisile has died and there is no one to head the family. This creates an opportunity for people like Pekesa to come and widen that cleavage. Pekesa is used here to show that a clash can open opportunities for people with ulterior motives to use to achieve their goals. It should be noted that by the end of the nineteenth century Mqhayi was about 25 years old. He was old enough to see what was threatening his people. Dathorne (1976:48) writes:

Since the breakup of the tribal organization with the coming of Christianity, there was a latent desire for the individual to return to the solidarity of the tribe.

Mqhayi understood the White people because he was educated at a mission school at Lovedale, in Alice and had some unpleasant experiences with them. That Mqhayi refused to teach history the way White people wanted him to teach it and subsequently resigned his post can throw some light on the aims of those missionaries. Mqhayi's reaction to those missionaries can be interpreted in two ways. The first one is that it tells us about Mqhayi's love for, and commitment to, his people. The second one is that it tells us about the motives of the missionaries. There is a subtle reference to the type of history which the authorities preferred. One cannot avoid saying that the type of history they preferred was the one which promoted their interests. As a lover of the human race Mqhayi could not be false to his people and consequently he sacrificed his post and gave up teaching altogether.

C. Jahnheinz (1961:185) shows how developed African culture was when he notes:

... we had our own literature, our own religion, medicine, science, and education.

Extract C shows how self-sufficient the Xhosa people were. This extract negates the view which was held by some White people that, as Leo Africanus cited by Qangule (1978:29) put it:

The inhabitants of the black lands are bucolic people without reason, wit or skill and with no experience of anything at all; they live like brutes without law and order.

Mqhayi has chosen one of the complicated but interesting themes for his book; that of justice. In his novel, Mqhayi clearly portrays the expertise of the Xhosa people and how law operates in traditional societies. He gives a vivid picture of how law operated before the arrival of the White conquerors with their law. Mqhayi (1931:115) observes:

Abantu abamhlope bate bakufika pakati kwetu, kwako ukubuzana nokupikisana pakati kwabo bodwa, abanye besiti akuko mbuso kumaXosa, into ekoyo lulaulo nje lwenkosi, xa isenamandla okoyisa, esuka igwebe igqibe kume ngayo nokuba uluntu luyakolwa nokuba alukolwa.

When the White people arrived among us, there was questioning and debating among them, some saying there was no form of government among the Xhosas, the only thing which existed was the despotic rule of a chief, while he still had power to bully, who would simply pass verdict and that would be final, whether the society was satisfied or not.

When the missionaries first made contact with the Black people, they had no idea whatsoever of a Black man's way of life. They saw chiefs as despots who were not serving the interests of their people. By so doing they were reducing the status of Black people to that of animals who were ruled by the law of the jungle - the survival of the fittest. With this distorted judgement the Whites wanted to embark on their civilizing policy which Mqhayi condemns strongly in his preface. It may also happen that some of them were quite aware of the level of development in Xhosa culture but they were just turning a blind eye at some of the issues. They used ignorance as an excuse. In Mqhayi's novel, Babini behaves like a stranger in his own country. He knows what is expected of him, as a senior male in the family, but is deliberately avoiding his responsibilities in order to cater for his individual needs.

Mqhayi's upbringing, as we have seen, played a vital role in moulding his character and broadening his perception of life. And because of this he took it upon himself to protect and defend the dignity of the Xhosa people. His commitment to the Black nation is clearly stated in his preface which, I think, sums up the motive behind his writing the novel. We can see Mqhayi's novel as an effort to try and resist the current which is going to sweep away the whole nation.

The current referred to by Mqhayi is Christianity and civilization. He sees these two as tools which are

specially designed to sweep away other cultures so that the western culture can replace them. If the western culture can replace the indigenous culture then people will lose their national pride. They will stop being a group but will be seen as a collection of individuals. This point is clearly illustrated by Vuyisile's family. It is no longer a family unit in the true sense of the word but has become a collection of individuals with their individual views. Babini has his own satellites within the family and so has Wele. There are two major camps and their mother is in a dilemma because they are both her children.

In his novel, Mqhayi portrays his characters as being in a pitiful and shameful position because of their departure from the inherited ancestral norms. The genesis of the problem coincided with the departure from inherited ancestral norms. On the surface, Mqhayi's enterprise involves an imaginative return to the period at which the desertion took place. He is not doing this in a mood of nostalgia or even primarily one of recrimination but in order to sort out the strengths from the weaknesses of the society, the exact point of junction between authenticity and self-betrayal. There was no problem before the death of Vuyisile. The problem started after his death. According to Xhosa tradition, Vuyisile was supposed to have been slaughtered for. Babini, as a senior twin was supposed to see to it that his deceased father was properly propitiated through the holding of a lamentation ceremony. This was not done and

as a result Vuyisile turned his back against his family, hence this clash between the twin brothers. The verdict clearly shows that Mqhayi was not aiming at recrimination because the verdict did not state who was at fault among the litigants. Instead the blame was put on Hintsa and his counsellors for failing to hold the lamentation ceremony. At this ceremony the chief announces the son who is going to take over headship of the family. Zabala et.al (1974:16) say about the dead and the living:

The dead have a powerful hold on the living.
They control and regulate their lives and
activities from the grave.

Mqhayi seems to suggest that there must be the blending of the two cultures. Neither should dominate. The above point becomes very clear when one considers what Hintsa said to the twins. He asked the twins to join forces and work together. In his verdict he did not state who the senior twin was and who the junior one was. Instead he adopted a very clever stance of not pronouncing the senior. He emphasized the joining of forces and working together for the uplifting of their family's standard. They were given equal responsibility.

In his novel he is advocating that the traditional Xhosa culture must not be abandoned and have the western culture replacing it. Instead he wants the two cultures to complement each other. Jordan (1973:104-5) says about Mqhayi:

A lover of the human race, he associated himself with progressive movements and institutions. He understood alike the illiterate and educated, and as a result his social influence was wide.

From what Jordan says we gather that Mqhayi did not favour a particular section of the human race. He liked and loved the human race in its entirety. Mqhayi is trying to show the world that before the intrusion of the missionaries, Blacks indeed had a form of civilization that was satisfying to those who grew up in it. He achieves that by portraying how people lived before the intrusion of the missionaries. On the surface Mqhayi seems to believe in traditionalism as a return to the ideal society. Ityala Lamawele seems to be haunted by the past. It seems to be romanticizing the precolonial peacefulness. The whole novel seems to be depicting a nostalgic atmosphere in its search for an ideal past upon which a new world may be built. This is not the case. In actual fact, he uses it to expose the confusion and the shallowness on which today's so-called progressive society is based. To him, everything with the traditional setting had significance, symbolism and deep religious meaning.

In addition to the complication of the theme, Mqhayi has made his novel even more complicated through his characters, especially the chief characters. The litigants are twin brothers, and, according to Khulile Majeke, they are considered as one. We can also take an alternative route and say the point that Mqhayi is trying

to make here is that it is very difficult to deal with brothers especially those who are seen as one (same people) when one suddenly turns against the others, in fact himself. The same name has been split for two people who are in fact one. The idea behind using twins and allowing Khulile to explain his opinion about twins was to show that the different cultures were like twins. No culture was better than the other. The only thing which could be done was to blend the two cultures and have one common culture which would neither be Black nor white. He feels that whatever problem there is between these two cultures can still be resolved amicably. We are confronted with characters who not only come from the same background but also from the same family and yet they give different interpretations of their customs and traditions. This could be an indication of the strain and stresses that result from the meeting of two cultures where one is perceived as being strong and the other weak. According to our definition of culture, this would also apply to the bearers of culture. Those who see themselves as having a strong culture tend to look down upon those with a supposedly weak culture. Should that happen there is bound to be some form of resistance by those who are looked down upon.

The issue at hand in Ityala Lamawele is presented as seniority by Wele. Wele pretends to be claiming seniority but deep down he knows what he is fighting for. The clash is about cultural issues. The term culture in this context will not be limited to the man-made part of the

environment but will be extended to include people nurtured in that particular environment. If we follow this argument then the traditional Xhosa culture will be the one which does not want any form of domination. It will be taken to be the one which wants things to be put right. It is that culture which recognises and respects the existence of other cultures.

Babini shows signs of being alienated from his culture. He knows what is expected of him but is deliberately ignoring and neglecting his duties and his responsibilities. Wele challenges Babini for his behaviour, for not respecting the customs and traditions of his family.

Mqhayi's story about the birth of twins is reminiscent of Thammar's twins in the Bible. The Biblical story is quoted by Mqhayi in his 1931 edition. It reads:

"Kwati ekuzaleni kwake, kwavela isandla; watabata umzalisikazi, wabopa esandleni salo usinga olubomvu, esiti Eli lapuma kuqala. Kute ke lakusibuyisa isandla salo, nanko kupuma umzawlana walo. Wati, Yinina ukuba uzityobozele? Watiywa igama lokuba Peretse" (Oko kukuti u-Tyobozayo) (1931:NP)

And when she was in labour, one put out a hand; and the midwife took and bound on his hand a scarlet thread, saying, " This came out first." But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out; and she said, " What a breach you have made for yourself!" Therefore his name was called Perez. (Translation from The Holy Bible: Gen.38,28-29)

Douglas(1965:996) writes the following about Perez:

Perez...one of the sons of Judah by Tamar his daughter-in-law ... was so named because though his twin Zarah put out his hand first, Perez was the first delivered, and it was said that he had broken forth.

The parallel which can be drawn between the actions of Babini and Perez is reminiscent of the invasion of the Xhosa people by the White section of the population who wanted to destroy the culture of the former. They forced their way and ignored the presence of the Xhosa culture. Babini is doing exactly that. Wele has indicated his presence by putting out his hand. Despite all that, Babini transgresses and comes out first and uses that as a valid reason for him to be declared a senior. The nomenclature itself throws some light on the behaviour of Perez - 'the one who breaks forth'. The name itself suggests that his actions were not approved of. The same can be said of western culture, which was arrogantly assumed to be superior than African culture by the white colonialists.

That Wele represents the traditional Xhosa culture is clearly shown by his behaviour. He clings to custom and tradition whereas Babini shows no respect for custom and tradition. Babini is reported to have taken away three cattle at three different occasions without consulting with any member of his family. Writing about cattle ownership, Burgland (1975:110) states:

The cattle of the homestead are not the property of the father of the homestead only. They are equally the animals of the lineage shades. When they (the shades) are complaining of hunger, they are calling for food from their

own flock. Hence the very strong feeling that regulates behaviour-pattern in regard to cattle and milk especially those that involve women and homestead animals. Interference with household cattle is not only an interference with the animals or the father of the household. It is an interference with the whole male population of the lineage, including the shades.

By interfering with the cattle of the homestead, Babini was indirectly inviting the wrath of the ancestors as well as that of the other male lineage members. Babini acted contrary to tradition according to which he was supposed to have consulted with either Wele or Pekesa before driving cattle out of the family's kraal.

This point is further illustrated by Krige. Although he has written about the Zulu speaking people, their sentiments about cattle and the beliefs they hold are more or less the same as those held by the Xhosa people and the other Bantu speaking peoples of Southern Africa. The strongest belief is that they see their life as being centred around cattle. Krige (1950:188) observes that cattle provide an important link between the world of the living and that of the dead:

Cattle are not the only link between the ancestors and their living descendants, but are the only means whereby the Zulu can at will get into touch with the ancestral spirits to make known his wants, or ask his blessings. This is accomplished through a sacrifice.

Communal feeling and corporate living are the operational base of the Xhosa traditional society and Mqhayi brings out this sense of sharing and oneness very successfully.

A shared language implies the very potential for communal feeling and action which Mqhayi wishes to realize. When the delegation from Hintsa's Great Place arrived at Ngabarha, the residents of Ngabarha sent some cows to Majeke's home to help him feed his visitors. They were also slaughtered for. The slaughtering of a beast for the visitors is an allusion to traditional hospitality. They were not legally obliged to do that but they felt it was their duty to assist in feeding and entertaining the visitors. Although they were sent to Majeke's home, the people of Ngabarha felt that they were not Majeke's visitors only but were the visitors of the whole community of Ngabarha.

There is this deep rooted belief among the Xhosa people that a stranger has to be treated with dignity. Mqhayi shows that clearly in his Ityala Lamawe. Men roam freely without having any fear of being attacked. Wherever they go they are entertained. The haves share whatever they have with the have-nots. Mqhayi here seems to be preaching African socialism (ubuntu). Wherever a man finds himself there he is given food and shelter. Babini acted contrary to tradition and he wanted to break all that the traditional institutions stood for.

At the coming out ceremony, held to celebrate his sister's completion of the initiation period, *intonjane* Babini refused to offer the guests their share of the meat. He was bound by tradition to give guests their share. He also chased Pekesa away when he went to

Vuyisile's home to discuss the lamentation ceremony. This is an important ceremony which has to be performed when the head of the family has died. Babini did not show any respect for culture and is portrayed as someone who upholds western values. Although Mqhayi does not overtly state that Babini is acting contrary to custom, it is evident from the way in which he has been portrayed that he has no respect for custom and tradition. On the other hand, Wele can be seen as an advocate of traditional values. The fact that he is opposed to what Babini is doing is ample evidence that he upholds traditional values. He is concerned about what his twin brother is doing. As a result of his brother's wayward behaviour, he decided to take the matter to the great place in order to get some form of arbitration. When comparing the two brothers one finds that there is not even a single aspect of culture which Babini respects. On the other hand Wele clings to tradition.

Mazrui in Killam (1973: 79) observes:

... it is the culture which he inherits that gives a man his human dignity.

Mazrui's statement suggests that the culture of an individual plays a role in moulding one's character. We can also deduce from the above quotation that culture is geared towards producing dignified people who would work towards the improvement of their society. The above statements lead us to conclude that Babini did not only

offend his family but he offended the whole community because culture is basically a communal property.

Wele, the junior twin, is portrayed as someone who has taken it upon himself to look after the family. He maintains the family and sees to the smooth running of the family affairs. The testimony of their sisters also proves that Wele was the one who acted in a responsible manner. One of their sisters reported that Babini owned nothing which in Xhosa traditional terms challenges his manhood and his ability to support and maintain his own family. The only person who owned valuable things was Wele.

In Xhosa traditional societies, a man's status was determined by the number of cattle he controlled. A man who had no cattle was not accorded the same status as someone who had cattle. This, therefore, means that Wele was of a higher status than his brother, Babini. Hunter (1969:122) notes the following about ownership and responsibility:

Ownership entails the duty of administering the property for the benefit of dependants. A man owns cattle, but he is responsible for the maintenance of his sons and daughters who are living with him, for clothing married daughters and for the good relations of all with the ancestral spirits.

Babini, who claims to be the senior twin, was entitled to ownership of cattle after the death of his father. But the way in which he administered those cattle was not for

the benefit of the other family members. By so doing he was not working in accordance with set cultural norms. To traditional Xhosa people cattle ownership was communal and this communal ownership of cattle was a cultural aspect. This suggests the difference between the two cultures. Traditional culture as portrayed in Ityala Lamawele seems to be concerned with the welfare of the whole community as evidenced by Wele looking after his family. In this case Wele's family is representative of the community at large. Western culture seems to emphasize individualism thus Babini is not concerned about what is taking place in his family but is only interested in what happens to him personally.

The story in Ityala Lamawele is a metaphor. Mqhayi states this himself in his preface when he says the book was originally written in an allegorical mode. He has used the two brothers as his vehicles to attack not only the White conquerors but also those who allow themselves to be made to look at themselves the same way they are looked at by their conquerors. He rejects Eurocentrism through giving minute details about what actually happens in Xhosa courts. This imaginary story is used in an almost allegorical manner to decipher Xhosa legal practices. The whole book is about the battle between Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism. The dispute between the twin brothers is an attempt at showing the oneness of culture as well as its diversity.

The arrangement of characters is according to their social roles. The women, Singiswa, Teyase and Yiliwe are used to demonstrate the role of women in cases of this nature. The characters lack individuality. Singiswa, Teyase and Yiliwe are used as symbols. It could have been any woman of that age. It is the same case with men. Senior men are used to demonstrate the role of males of that age according to their positions and ranks. These characters can be replaced without affecting the impact of the story on the readers. That Majeke was fetched from Ngabarha to come and help the great place had nothing to do with the help his father offered to the great place. He was simply invited because of his age. It could have been any other man of his age.

3.3 Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that Mqhayi has used the twins metaphorically. They represent two opposing views about culture. Babini looks at his culture in the same way as the colonialists look at it. Although this is the case, Mqhayi hopes that the two can be made to view their culture from the same perspective.

This chapter has shown Mqhayi in his role as a committed writer. As early as 1914 Mqhayi was already involved with the strenuous task of decolonising the people's minds, not by engaging in radical speeches but by using a very clever device. He shows his people what they had lost through their unqualified acceptance of western ideals

whose authenticity had been left largely unchallenged. He allows Babini to behave and act in the same way as the conquerors did when they came to this part of the world. They did not respect the culture of the Black people and they did not even bother to study it in order to see its importance and relevance to its bearers.

Mqhayi does not only criticise the conquerors but he also criticises those people who have accepted this colonisation even mentally. Those are the people who have turned against their own culture and view it as the conquerors view it.

This novel can therefore be seen as Mqhayi's attempt to rid his people of mental slavery. He is trying to show the Black people that the solution to the problem of oppression lies with them. They must stop pointing fingers at other people and should start looking seriously at themselves for they are partly to blame.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTERS IN ITYALA LAMAWELE AND HOW THEY CONTRIBUTE IN BRINGING OUT THE SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The objective of this chapter is to study the characters in Ityala Lamawele and see how they raise specific socio-political issues. Another point of interest will be to see if Mqhayi's poetic ability affects the portrayal of his characters in this novel. It is our assertion that when a praise poet writes a novel one can expect some boundary crossing between genres: prose and praise poetry tradition. As a spokesperson of the people one can expect the praise poet to reflect on the socio-political aspects of the people's culture in his character delineation. The fact that he is a praise poet, is bound to manifest itself in the portrayal of some of his characters.

The tradition of praise singing is also characterised by lack of praise poems for women. This research has found out also that Mqhayi's use of praise poems for purposes of characterization in this novel is true to the conventions of this tradition. However, women are always mentioned in praise poems and are usually given important positions or roles, like that of being mothers of the nation. Again, if a man does something praise worthy a reference will always be made to his mother or his family tree. This comes in the form of a genealogy.

This seems to be what is happening in Ityala Lamawe. The midwives are given important positions although they are not given major roles to play. Their evidence is very important in this case.

4.1 Theoretical background

Gikandi (1987:111) argues that a specific preoccupation of the African novel was the existence of a kind of utopian past. He notes that:

These novels try to establish a historical link between a mythical past in which African communities were more united and organized around a set of humane principles.

Killam (1984:232) contends that this preoccupation is linked to the need to establish a meaningful world-view, and that:

... while it remains sensitive to events outside itself, the novel is an attempt (an urgent, even desperate attempt) to develop a philosophy of life.

Gikandi's theory is that the African novelist is mainly concerned with social organization and the principles which govern the lives of the people. From the statement above, we gather that African writers tend to pay more attention to socio-political matters than they do to literary art. In other words there is a certain sense in which African literature is functional. According to this view there is nothing like art for art's sake in the minds of some African writers. The portrayal of

communities who are self-sufficient and well organized is done with that socio-political motive in mind. As Gikandi points out the principles governing such communities are also outlined. In most cases these principles are humane and reasonable because they have been agreed upon and are not forced on people. And it is those humane principles which keep the communities peacefully united. If one takes Gikandi's statement further, one is inclined to conclude that the disappearance of the humane principles led to disunity among African communities. The relevant question here will be to ask what caused the disappearance of those humane principles. There is another implied suggestion in Gikandi's statement. When he says the African novels try to establish a historical link, he also implies that there is a missing historical link and that the characters used in such novels will be revealed only in so far as they contribute towards the establishment of that historical link. When we test Mqhayi's novels against Gikandi's theory, it seems reasonable to agree with him.

What Killam says (vide p 104 of dissertation) is also true of Ityala Lamawe. Mqhayi has used events which are outside the novel with the aim of developing a philosophy of life which is that no individual is given total freedom to do whatever he feels like doing in traditional societies. The social and political institutions of traditional societies have perfected the art of exacting conformity from the individual and discouraging deviation and subversion of the common will.

In all their workings, these institutions emphasize the primacy of the group over the individuals who compose it. This communal feeling is clearly portrayed in the concern which is shown by the people of Thoboshane about Babini's deviant behaviour. The contribution of the individual to society is still very much a high ideal whereas in the western nations there is an excess of individualism, a self contained type of approach to the problems of society. Commenting on communality in African life Kunene in Duerden and Pieterse (1972:88) states:

As you know, African life is organized in communal form, and the emphasis is always in the respect of the individual belonging to the community itself and on services that the individual performs in relation to the community, and therefore the emphases are on the social obligation of the individual to the community.

Characterization is often used as a method of reflecting attitudes and values as expressed through the collective society or as held by a particular individual under scrutiny. In Ityala Lamawe Mghayi does not portray his characters individually so that one can follow their development. Characterization in Ityala Lamawe can be seen to partake of the special nature of the traditional culture, the organic nature of the family and community relationships. Mghayi does not reveal his characters' psychological make up but rather translates it into action. He uses them to show a global picture of the traditional Xhosa society. Instead of concentrating on character delineation, he seems to be showing his grasp of the true nature of the relationship of the individual

to society. Where Mghayi allows his characters to act individually, their individuality is still defined in terms of outside factors which influence them, factors which are lodged in society and the history of the character.

4.1.1 Characters in Ityala Lamawele

Characters in Ityala Lamawele are morally defined and therefore can best be seen in their moral attitudes rather than in the revelation of their psychological development. In fact they undergo no growth at all because they are lacking in psychological depth since they are generalized rather than particularized. This makes it very difficult to analyse adequately the individual characters in Ityala Lamawele. A character who is not allowed to act and respond naturally to whatever event or issue cannot be studied in depth. Most of his characters are in fact not even involved in situations which would allow them to act naturally.

Chapter one of this novel, Ityala Lamawele, is just over four pages long. In those pages there are nineteen characters mentioned. None of these characters has been given a chance to develop. Out of nineteen characters in chapter one, fourteen of them are mentioned in this chapter only and they never appear again in the novel. From the handling of his characters one can assume that Mghayi is not interested in character revelation as such but that his overriding aim is rather to dramatize a

particular aspect of their life. His characters collectively represent Mqhayi's point of view and have been specifically selected to explore the life of the Xhosa people in its entirety. He has, therefore, broken the conventional pattern which serves to dictate and prescribe how one should write. Instead he has created what seems to be a more authentic image of the Black people and he has tried to be as close as possible to real life.

In his novel Mqhayi has portrayed a society which is more united and organized. It is a utopia of some kind where everyone strives for peace. We have seen the concern of the whole Xhosa nation when there was a misunderstanding between Vuyisile's twins. It was the concern of every male member of the community to find a solution. The aim was not to convict and pass judgement in favour of either of the twins but to have an amicable solution that would leave both litigants satisfied and happy. Mqhayi seems to imply that everybody must try to find a solution to the problems facing the people of South Africa. If they can join hands and work together, they will find a solution.

The litigants in Ityala Lamawele are twin brothers. Dathorne (1976:44) writes the following about these twins:

His, (Mqhayi) story ostensibly about the right to rule, concerns the dubious assertion of individuality. The mere fact that they are twins not only heightens their similarity, but makes their case for separate recognition futile and ridiculous. The author asserts the predominance of the tribe, since it is the old

tribal member who finally helps the court to decide.

The use of twin brothers makes the characterization in Mqhayi's book even more complicated. Twins, in a sense are virtually the same person. In other words this can be taken as a personal fight inflicted against the self. This kind of internal battle, which is partly schizoid, partly masochistic is tragic in that the whole person is denied a voice and is forced to articulate the ideas of two contradictory personalities. To prove that it is this kind of clash - where a person fights against himself - Mqhayi portrays the twins as almost echoing each other's desires. Wele and Babini both 'claim' seniority. After the verdict, they change, they each claim to be the junior twin. From that claim we gather that whether Babini is declared a junior or a senior twin there is one thing which is not going to change. The fact that he is a twin will remain unchanged. The problem with these twins is that their desires and motivations are in opposition - just as the writing in a mirror-image becomes inverted. Babini is attracted by some of the things which do not quite agree with traditional behavioural patterns. At the same time he shows his interest in seniority which in traditional societies requires more than merely proclaiming that one is a senior. Actions are required to convince that one is indeed senior. In the first instance, the issue at hand appeared to be seniority. It seemed to be appealing to both twins. After the verdict, being a junior was equally appealing to both Wele and Babini. In this case Mqhayi is stressing the fact that they are twins and does not give any importance to the

qualifiers - junior and senior. The common thing between the twins is that they are twins and that common thing makes their case for separate recognition ridiculous¹. They have the same interests. This again emphasizes oneness. The comment made by the local people also bears testimony to the sameness and the oneness of the twins. When people were saying "*ubunye buxake nomteto*" (oneness cannot be destroyed even by law - there is nothing that can come between them) is an acknowledgement of their oneness and sameness. As twin brothers we expect them to join forces together and work very hard towards the improvement of their family's economic standing. This is not the case with these twins. Instead of working towards the improvement of their life at home, the twins start quarrelling; both 'claiming' seniority. In this case, the use of the twins serves to show us where the problem began. Here, Mqhayi seems to suggest that the source of the clash lies in the fact that Black people created cracks and instabilities which allowed the enemy to penetrate and colonise the society. In other words just as the twins manifested duality, their differences rendered them weak and created an opportunity for the outsiders to penetrate. This is shown by the actions of Pekesa who, although a close relative, takes advantage of the dispute between the twin brothers. He wants to cause a further cleavage in Vuyisile's home. Mqhayi (1931:39) gives us Pekesa's intentions and he writes:

1. Dathorne O.R. 1976 African Literatures in the Twentieth Century p 44

Ubonakele uBabini etata le igodukayo. Uvakele uPekesa ebuza shushu esiti: "Uyapi?" Ute omnye " Ndiyagoduka". UPekesa: Ugodukela pi? Unekaya? Uya kwakweliya gqwirakaz'unyoko? Unanina? UBabini: "Hayi ndiyagoduka" UPekesa: Hi Lalo, hi Lalo, uyabon'ukuba selimgqibil'elagqwirakaz'unina? Masimshiye, masimshiye. " UBabini: "Hayi, bawokazi, uma akatakati. Ukuba kuko ubuta (ubuthi) kulento bungaba kuwe nakum".

Babini was seen taking the one (path) that was leading home. Pekesa was heard asking angrily and saying: "Where are you going?" The other one said "I am going home:" Pekesa: Which home are you going to? Do you have a home? Are you going to that witch again, your mother? What is wrong with you? Babini: "No, I am going home". Pekesa: Hey Lalo, hey Lalo, do you see that sorceress, his mother has finished (overcome) him. Let us leave him, let us leave him." Babini: "No, uncle, mother is not a sorceress, if there is witchcraft in this thing it can either be with you or with me."

The above dialogue between Pekesa and Babini shows clearly that Pekesa was not at all interested in establishing cordial relations between the members of Vuyisile's family. Instead, he is intent on stoking the fires of hatred and he is also drawing Babini away from the other family members. Without his family Babini has no identity; he is lost and aimless until he comes back to his family. Whatever he does will not be appreciated by both the living and the dead members of his family and the people around them because of the stigma he carries. Forsaking a family, especially at a time of crisis, is an unpardonable sin in traditional societies. Such an action does not offend the living members of the family only but the dead members as well are affected by such an action.

By this Mqhayi is trying to show the people that if outsiders are dragged into an internal quarrel, they

aggravate the whole situation instead of trying to make peace. At the same time he is demonstrating that although traditional people were able to identify with, and share the plight of a member of the community, there were also those elements who were not congruous with the community's norms. Such members were never tolerated. In other words, much as traditional societies were concerned about maintaining harmony with their members, there were certain things which were not tolerated.

The author despises idleness while he admires industry. We do not learn of any constructive thing being done by Babini in order to improve the lifestyle of his family. He is notorious. He goes away from home for days on end attending festivities. In his characterization Mqhayi dramatizes this imbalance by letting Babini and Wele act as weights on the scale. On the one end there is Wele and on the other there is Babini. Babini does not consult with any member of the family about the family affairs. He looks down upon Wele and does not give him a chance to administer some of the family affairs because he is designated as the junior twin. Babini uses seniority as a licence to be mischievous. On the other hand, Wele acts responsibly. He sees to the smooth running of the family affairs.

As we have already illustrated Babini's actions were contrary to Xhosa tradition. In Xhosa traditional societies cattle are a communal property. This communal ownership is evident even in the usage of language when

referring to cattle ownership. In traditional societies the head of the family would never refer to cattle as his - my cattle - *iinkomo zam*. He would always refer to them as - my family's cattle - *iinkomo zakuthi* or may even use his clan name. In such a case he would refer to them as - the cattle of the Mpinga clan - *iinkomo zamaMpinga*. No self-respecting Xhosa man can do as he pleases with the family herd. A disorderly unfulfilled life such as that of Babini, was looked upon almost as a curse because it became not only an eternal shame to the entire family tree, but a living insult to the ancestral spirits. This point becomes clear when one considers Mxhuma's question. When he heard about the dispute between the twins, he attributed that dispute to ancestral displeasure; a curse of some kind which resulted in a dispute between the twin brothers. The ancestors were not pleased with what Babini was doing and consequently he was cursed. This curse must be viewed as a form of punishment meted out by the ancestral spirits. Babini behaves in a manner which does not satisfy the ancestral spirits since he does not show any respect to them. This is seen as a direct invitation to the wrath of the ancestors by Wele, who feels that he should act quickly in order to stop the escalation of this wrath. This curse is two pronged. It serves to call Babini to order and curb his undesirable activities. This is shown by Wele when he takes his brother to court. He was given strict orders at the court to go home and help Wele to look after the family. Again it serves as a means of showing their ability to redirect their degradation to the one who despises them. The

insult that was meant for the ancestors by Babini when he took cattle out of the kraal without seeking permission from them was diverted and redirected to him. He appeared before the court as the accused which is seen as an humiliation in traditional societies. As a circumcised man he is supposed to be very responsible but in this case, the nature of the allegation questions his manhood. Although this may appear as a challenge to Babini's manhood it could also be seen as querying the significance of the custom itself. If it is true that circumcision has a positive influence on one's behaviour, then we do not expect Babini to behave in the manner in which he is behaving. This, therefore, seems also to be a challenge to the relevance of circumcision to the present generation. The mistake that was made by the guardian of the boys during circumcision shows a shift from traditional values. Wele reports that he was the first one to be operated on whereas, procedurally, it was Babini who was supposed to be operated on first. Mqhayi succeeds in showing the importance of Xhosa traditions for the well being of society and its members, and thus demonstrates that because things were not done properly in the case of Babini, he develops into an irresponsible person. This shift from the tradition is also reflected by the reaction of the men who were at the Great Place. When those men heard that Wele was the first one to be circumcised, they, inwardly passed verdict in favour of Wele.² Babini, in this case, is portrayed as someone who has his own standard of judgement. As far as we could

assess, his criterion is totally different from the one used by the community at large. It should be noted that the society portrayed by Mqhayi is a traditional one. To Babini traditional mores, ethics and values do not have the same appeal which they have to the other members of the community. The teachings which he had at the circumcision school did not remain indelible in his mind. In this instance he seems to be showing some signs of disrespect for his customs and traditions.

However, with regard to the portrayal of a closely-knit family which is working very hard to live in harmony, and be guided by a set of norms and mores, Mqhayi is successful. He positions his characters in places where they are strangers. The delegation that was sent to Lucangwana was well received in all the villages they went past. He also shows how the delegation to Ngabarha was treated. This sense of oneness is shown too by the concern expressed by the people of Thoboshane. They attended the court case everyday and, apart from being curious, most of them felt it was their duty to be there and see to it that justice was done.

The political dimension of Mqhayi's novel is seen as inseparable from his sensitivity to injustice, oppression and the suffering of the masses. He states this himself in his autobiography when he claims that he knew that one day he would be of service to his people in political, social and educational matters. His revolutionary option, as depicted by Wele against Babini, stems from the

conviction that sorrow is more meaningful when collectively shared rather than individually felt. This is seen when Ndlombose shows deep concern when his younger brother, Bukwana, makes a mockery about the decision taken to solicit help from the sage, Khulile Majeke. Mghayi (1931:19) captures this feeling in the following words:

Kunanin'ukuti oku usapo lukaVuyisile lubambene,
kubekuk'amagezana ami entabeni evuyelela?

Why is it that, when Vuyisile's family is in a predicament, there are fools standing on the mountain rejoicing?

Wele is portrayed as a giant both literally and metaphorically. He is painted as a tall, stout and bearded young man whereas Babini is reported to be short, thin and without beard. On another level we find that Wele possesses skills which Babini does not possess. As a young boy Wele proved that he was capable of fending for himself. In their bird hunting expeditions, Wele would always bring home a few of the birds he had killed. Babini would get some from Wele. Such seemingly small happenings are important in traditional societies because that is how boys' capabilities are judged. Wele shows that he possesses survival skills. He is mentally stable and is not excited by the social gatherings which his peers attend. Unlike his brother, Babini, who would go away from home for days on end for the sake of gaining popularity as the best traditional dancer, Wele is mainly concerned with the well-being of his family. He is

renowned throughout Thoboshane for his courage, industry and material achievements. This is confirmed, inadvertently though, by one of his sisters when she says about Babini:

UBabini akamntu unanto kodwa akasivimbi nto enayo.
(1931:27)

Babini does not own anything but he does not refuse us anything if he has it. (emphasis mine)

Wele's relations with his sisters reveal an underlying harmony which can only exist between those who share sympathy and affection, and seems to show that the development of individual character or its expression depends to a large extent on the atmosphere within which the individual subsists. In Babini's quarrel with his brother and the other peripheral members of his family the primacy of the latter is soon established. Babini's behaviour is recognized and borne with, but when he breaks certain norms, Wele makes him feel the full rigour of his repression.

While Wele is Mqhayi's most direct and frequent vehicle for expressing his political thought, the most important message instead of coming from one of the younger westernized generation, comes from the traditionalist, white haired sage, Khulile Majeke. Mqhayi can also be seen as someone who does not believe in youth with new ideas which, in most cases, clash with traditional values. As a custodian of tradition we see Khulile

venturing down to the Great Place with a small delegation to come and clarify the position of twins and the principle of seniority.

Wele is seen to be showing his opposition to what his brother is doing and, because of his deviant behaviour, deciding to take drastic measures in order to instil some sense of responsibility in him. This is explained by Mqhayi through Wele when he says that he is not interested in seniority but is preventing misfortunes which are going to befall Vuyisile's home.

An important dimension of Ityala Lamawele's political impact is its devastating portrait of an abuse of power. Babini, the senior twin, uses his power and position in a manner that does not agree with the spirit of the other members of the family. Mqhayi expresses his political thought by allowing Wele to take the matter to court and have him saying afterwards he was not interested in seniority. From this statement one can already make some intelligent guesses that Mqhayi discourages any form of dictatorship. He advocates a fair and just treatment for all people. It can also be inferred that the effect and the intention of the system Babini represents, rather than is influenced by, was to distance the people step by step from their culture and values. This is clearly seen in Babini's actions when he shows no respect for custom and tradition. We find him chasing his uncle, Pekesa, away when he came to discuss the holding of the lamentation ceremony for the late Vuyisile. At the same

time the system wanted to expose people to the very real seductive power of European (missionary) civilization. We notice the egocentrism with which Babini does things. He does not consult with any member of the family on any matter. He treats the property of the family as his personal belonging. Commenting about cattle ownership, Burglund (vide p. 89-90 of this dissertation) views cattle as communal property. .

In Mqhayi's novel men and women move about with such sureness, ease, freedom and dignity that, without question they lead complete lives. This is a kind of society he would like to see. He is trying to portray an ideal society where differences and disputes are solved amicably - a society which will be one big family. We have seen the misunderstanding which existed between the twins. From the opening pages right up to verdict Wele and Babini have been opposing forces. This duelling technique in character portrayal is useful in that it provides us with possible clues to Mqhayi's likes and dislikes as well as being a pointer to his general value standards. After the verdict the two brothers started working towards a common goal - that of improving their home. Mqhayi seems to be advocating a peaceful settlement without even mentioning who was right and who was wrong.

Mqhayi appears to be extremely keen on creating an ideal society but he does not do this for its own sake. It is a kind of protest against those who find this way of life primitive and want to see it replaced. There is an

underlying statement against the White conquerors who want to see this type of life, which they do not understand and do not even bother to understand, replaced by a foreign way of life. The choice and use of his characters is specifically for this purpose. His novel seems to be preoccupied with an ideal society. Mqhayi's preoccupation with utopian ideals is evidenced by the plot of his UDon Jadu. In his UDon Jadu Mqhayi also portrays an ideal society (at Mnandi) where there is democracy. In the opening pages of his UDon Jadu he seems to be dispelling the myth that all Boers are cruel by putting Don Jadu in a dangerous position and allowing a Boer to save him. On closer observation one finds that Mqhayi is not speaking in favour of this Boer. Rather he is showing how the conqueror can manipulate his victims to such an extent that he (the conqueror) can be seen as a Messiah by some gullible people. In another case he is trying to foster unity among the Black people. Here he cites an example of two ostriches who are fighting. When these ostriches see Don Jadu approaching their farm, they forget about their differences and they join forces to defend their territory. This is the kind of society that Mqhayi is advocating. UDon Jadu, in a way, counterbalances Ityala Lamaweale. Whereas in Ityala Lamaweale Mqhayi protests by piling up details of a culture which the conquerors have not bothered to investigate and understand better in UDon Jadu, he satirises assimilationists and collaborators.

That Mqhayi's characters were moving about with dignity and freedom is clearly portrayed by the delegation which was sent to Lucangwana's home. They were accorded respect wherever they went and we are not told of any incident where the delegation felt threatened.

Another delegation which was sent to Ngabarha was also accorded the same respect. Both delegations travelled freely and without any fear of treading on sacred or foreign ground. The reception they got throughout their journey emphasizes the fact that Mqhayi is portraying an ideal society, free of constraints and fears.

It is worth noting that Mqhayi's characters are mainly old people, and that it is the male folk who are in the majority, and it is they who are the ones who play major roles. From this we can get a picture of how traditional Xhosa people lived and of how duties were divided according to age and sex.

Khulile Majeke is an elder and a distinguished one throughout Xhosaland. Mqhayi brings this out by alluding to Khulile's descent. He states that Khulile's father once helped the Great Place in a more or less similar case, where queens were involved. In every traditional society elders hold a very revered and powerful position: as the custodians of social and political wisdom they are next to the ancestors. The hierarchy given by Mqhayi in one of his poems is as follows:

Hierarchy A.

1. Qamata
2. Ancestors
3. Elders
4. Menfolk
5. Womenfolk
6. Children

4.2 Explanation of Mqhayi's hierarchy

Qamata is right at the top. He is conceived of as a Supreme Being. He is the creator and the giver of life. He cannot be approached directly by those who are on this side of eternity because of the respect accorded to Him. Below Qamata are the ancestors who serve as mediators between Him and those who are on this side of eternity. Qamata is respected and therefore He cannot be approached directly by those who are below the level of the ancestors. This hierarchy is very important because it is the same as the one which is found in his Ityala Lamawele. Adherence to this hierarchy is very important. It is a way of monitoring one another's behaviour. Each level has a special role to play. The hierarchy also suggests the proper channel of communication. It also represents the organization of the traditional societies. Children, women and menfolk cannot approach the ancestors directly. If there is anything which they have to communicate to the ancestral spirits, then the elders will act as intermediaries except in cases of illness

where the affected person can approach them directly. Babini's actions were contrary to this link and by breaking with tradition he became isolated and alienated. Babini forced himself onto a level to which he did not belong, since it is only the ancestors who have a final claim to cattle. Through his actions, Babini was trying to act as an elder.

Confirming this hierarchy Hunter (1969:378) writes:

The petty headman recognized by a group of imizi was under the authority of a district chief, or more often under a headman responsible to the district chief. District chiefs were under a paramount chief.

Hunter's hierarchy is one which deals with political organization. Schematically it can be represented as follows:

Hierarchy B

1. Paramount chief
2. District chief
3. Headman
4. Petty Headman
5. Imizi

In hierarchy A the element of traditional religion is noticeable. The hierarchy seems to suggest that in traditional religion the notion of life after death exists. Immediately below the ancestors we get the elders who, in most cases, are the counsellors of the

chief or paramount chief. Below the elders we get the menfolk in general. Women and children are found in the lowest rung of the social ladder.

4.2.1 Explanation of Hunter's hierarchy

In hierarchy B we get the paramount chief as the highest authority. This hierarchy does not extend to the world hereafter. It concentrates on the living descendants only. It is interesting to note that this arrangement is also reflected in Mqhayi's treatment of characters. Hintsa, the paramount chief of the Xhosa people is the uppermost authority. People resort to him when they have tried all the other authorities. The case was tried at Lucangwana's court. When Wele was not happy with the verdict, he appealed to a senior authority. *Imizi*, which is a collection of families is not given any prominence in Mqhayi's novel. This also extends to his characters. Individual characters are not given any prominence but rather he concentrated on them as a group. Here, he is showing the cohesion which exists when people are united. He also wants to contrast this cohesion with the disintegration that results should any member fall out. This hierarchy also reflects the structuring of the society. *Imizi* is a group of houses sharing the same clan name. At the lowest rung we get *imizi*. This shows that the family as a unit has no importance on its own unless those families can come together. Throughout the book Mqhayi seems to be stressing the importance of unity.

In Ityala Lamawele Khulile is portrayed as the custodian of the greatest values as well as the worst faults and weaknesses of the Xhosa people. He brings this out when he gives his account of twins and seniority. Mqhayi (1931:29) writes in his novel:

U-Nkosiya¹mntu liwele kuyise, liwele elincinane;
ubukulu bafunyanwa nguye wabutata ehleli
umkuluwa wake uLiwana, kuba wabanana
ngecongwane. Ati ke wona amanyange makabutate
ubananise kade, aye ke nawo ezekela
kwezingaphambili iindawo.

Nkosiya¹mntu is one of his father's twins, he is a junior twin; he was given seniority while his brother Liwana was still alive, because he had bartered it with the flesh of the thigh. The old sages said he should take it for he had already bartered it, and they themselves were basing that on previous instances.

When one considers the above statement by Khulile, one is inclined to conclude that seniority is exchangeable and that there are precedents. Khulile seems to be saying that there are certain factors which can change one's status, like the system of bartering, as evidenced by Nkosiya¹mntu and Liwana and that there are well thought out mechanisms for this exchange. On the other hand one can say Khulile is trying to show some of the blunders that were made by the elders.

Khulile's utterance also makes a suggestion with regard to the sternness and strictness of one's decisions and promises. The sages did not even bother to consider the value or the 'price' paid by Nkosiya¹mntu. The value of

seniority is not commensurate with the 'price' paid by Nkosiyamntu. What is important to them (elders) is standing by one's word. This, again, is another important dimension which Mqhayi wants to bring to light. Once one has taken a decision one must be prepared to bear the consequences thereof. On the other hand we find Mqhayi (1931:29) through Khulile saying:

Inkulu le inikelwa ukuba ipate umzi nje kungenxa yokuba yona inamava okuvela tanci kunolunye usapo lwakowayo, inabantu bakowayo ebaziyo kunabo, inengcombolo ezivileyo yona ezingaviwanga ngabanye: obewele ubukulu bufika bubepina kunelinye bevele ngamininye nje?

The firstborn is given authority to have control over the homestead because he has experience of being born earlier than the other children in the family, he knows some people from his family which other children do not know, there are details he has heard which the others did not hear: Where then is the twin's seniority over the other because they are born on the same day?

The conclusion we arrive at, basing our argument on the above extract, is that what one does is very important when it comes to seniority. How one behaves is taken into consideration when one has to be officially recognized as the senior. One can also conclude that in Xhosa culture there was no stipulation as far as the principle of succession and descent was concerned. Mqhayi seems to be saying that one earns one's status. Even if you are born first if you fail to measure up to the required standard there are mechanisms that can be set in motion either to replace you or to encourage you to improve. He stresses the fact that a senior must be able to look after the family. On the other hand, the sages

who support Liwana do not take his ability to support the family into consideration. As far as they are concerned, Nkosiyamntu is justified in claiming seniority because he had bartered it. This group concentrates on faithfulness.

The author also seems to be dispelling the myth that chiefs were despots and the sole decision makers. He achieves this through his portrayal of Hintsa. Although Hintsa is the paramount chief, we find him consulting with Lucangwana, who is a headman. This sharing of views is also extended to the *mobile vulgus*. It strikes one that when it comes to certain positions, like those of kings and wise men, Mqhayi prefers to use well-known historical figures. Perhaps he wants to keep as close to reality as possible in order to give the story a good measure of authenticity and impact. Perhaps this signals the importance of oral history. At the Great Place we find Hintsa reprimanding a group of men who had not proceeded with the case stating that they were waiting for the paramount chief to arrive at the courtyard. Hintsa is in the background for the greater part of the case. It is very rare to find him asking questions at the courtyard. Again here we notice that being a paramount chief does not make one a Mr know-it-all. He gives everyone a chance to probe into the actual problem and come up with a solution that would be acceptable to both litigants. The cohesion of the society is also stressed here. Although the case has been brought before Hintsa's court, he does not see the problem of solving the case as

his. He sees it as the concern of the whole nation. This structuring of the society has greatly affected Mqhayi's portrayal of individual characters. He feels more comfortable when he portrays his characters in relation to the whole society.

Hintsa's consultation is not limited to his counsellors only. He extends it to whoever he thinks will have a solution to the problem.

After consulting with Lucangwana, we see him sending another delegation to Ngabarha to fetch Khulile Majeke so that he could get his advice on the principle of succession and seniority, especially where twins are involved. All the trouble that Hintsa is taking is an attempt by Mqhayi at negating the idea that chiefs were despots.

Mqhayi does not have many female characters in his novel. This does not mean that he is against the womenfolk because the few that have been mentioned have been given prominence. Singiswa, Teyase and Yiliwe, the only few women who have been given prominence have important roles to play. They are key witnesses and their statements are germane to the outcome of the case. The importance of their utterances is further strengthened by Bukwana. He condemns the decision taken at the Great Place to send a delegation to Ngabarha because he feels that Teyase and Yiliwe have given enough evidence. Mqhayi (1931:18) captures this in Bukwana's declamations. He writes:

Sezingapina ngok'inkunzi zalomzi kaPalo?
Fuda sisiti nguHintsa kupela akuko yimbi.

.....
Inkunz'ekwel'eziny'inkunzi
Ndidane ndayinko ndakuv'ukuba izitenile
Yazinikel'eNqabara kwabakaMajeke.
Ayikwel'ikutenina Lenkunzi. Lwapel'usapo
kukutshisana ngasemva.
Ngomzikizikan' ogqitywe kwa ngabafazi,
NguTeyase noSingiswa kwamazolo
.....
Akuko nto iyakuvel'eNqabara.

How many bulls are now there at Phalo's house?
We thought it was Hintsa and no one else.

.....
The bull that mounts other bulls.
Was I disappointed when I heard that it had
castrated itself! And handed (power)
over to those of Majeke at Ngabarha.
Why is this bull not mounting?
The family is getting finished through burning
one another at home (things are going wrong
back home) Over a simple thing which has been
dismissed by women,
Teyase and Singiswa a long time ago.
.....
There is nothing that will come out of
Ngabarha.

This is a direct attack on Hintsa and his counsellors. The bard is challenging Hintsa's position. He uses a very strong metaphor when he calls Hintsa a bull. This immediately gives us the imagery of a cattle kraal. We think of a bull as the head in a cattle kraal. This therefore spills over to Hintsa. He is the most senior member in the community. The praise singer seems to be saying that Hintsa is giving his responsibility to other people. At the same time he is sounding a warning that it is a waste of time to send people to Ngabarha because the two women, Singiswa and Teyase have given a clear picture of what happened and therefore it is a futile exercise to

send people to Ngabarha. The status of the two women is elevated by Bukwana because he seems to be allowing them to have the final say.

4.3 The structuring of society

The structure of society is also reflected in the arrangement of characters. In chapter one of this novel we are introduced to Wele laying a charge against his brother. The nature of the charge is such that it puts them on the same level because Wele reports that they are twins which means they are of the same age. In fact they are equal in all respects. On the next level we get Fuzile, Ntentema, Dlisa and Kosani who urge Wele to proceed and tell them more about the case. Singiswa Teyase and Yiliwe who are found in the third level do not belong to it. They are in that level because of the information they have concerning the birth of twins. Above that level is Lucangwana. He is there because of his position of junior chief. Above that level we get Mxhuma who is the paramount chief's counsellor. There is a slight shift from the usual arrangement because we find Khulile being given such prominence that he seems to be at a level higher than that of the paramount chief. On closer scrutiny it becomes clear that there is no such thing. Hintsa is only using his powers to consult with any member of the society irrespective of that member's position in it.

The paucity of female characters in Mqhayi's novel is further evidence that he concentrates much on cultural aspects. He is again dramatizing an aspect of Xhosa life. The court proceedings were taking place at the courtyard which, according to Xhosa tradition, is a sacred place, a shrine and womenfolk are not allowed to be there. A concession is made though, to those women who have reached menopause. The women have to respect the courtyard because it is said to be a place where the ancestral spirits hold their meetings. For that reason it is only the menfolk who are allowed to be at the courtyard. On the surface one may conclude that Mqhayi has a certain attitude towards women. This is not the case. Mqhayi is bound by his loyalties to traditional culture. He probably deliberately allows himself to be constrained by the norms and mores of the society in order to achieve his objective. He adopts and maintains the traditional attitudes with regard to gender roles. The social organization seems to be the one which influences the arrangement and portrayal of characters. There is a fixed social ladder with different rungs for each different group in the society. The society is divided according to roles which each group plays. Some of the roles are not transferable. Singiswa, Teyase and Yiliwe are portrayed as midwives. These three have been chosen for their age and their gender. Children and men are out of question in this case. They can never act as midwives. There are fixed roles for a particular sex and age.

Mqhayi seems to be using character 'conflict' with an aim to show his readers his political standpoint. In Ityala Lamawele Mqhayi has used Wele and Babini to show what he likes and what he dislikes. He condemns Babini's behaviour but, at the same time, shows that resolving a dispute amicably is much more effective in cementing relations than finding one of the litigants guilty. He advocates that an amicable solution serves to bring the disputing parties closer together with the result that harmony and peace prevail. The way in which the characters show concern about the case is further evidence of the fact that the root cause of any problem has to be thoroughly investigated before a decision can be reached. This is shown by the dedication and the enthusiasm with which investigation was conducted.

An important dimension of Ityala Lamawele's socio-political impact is its aggressive attack on despots and those who use power as a licence to exploit and oppress other people. Babini uses his position, that of being a senior, in an irresponsible manner. He does what he feels like doing without taking into consideration the interest of the other family members. He does not want to have his dead father slaughtered for. He does not look after the other members of the family, especially his mother and younger sisters.

As a senior male member in the family he was supposed to look after his mother and his younger sisters. Instead of doing that he shifted the responsibility to his

younger brother, Wele. There is contradiction in his behaviour. He neglects the family. This means that he has removed that responsibility from himself and has given it to someone else. Although he has done that, he still holds back the powers to make decisions about the family affairs. On the other hand, Wele's actions can be seen as a powerful message about individual action, about struggle and about hope. Wele notices that his brother has gone out of hand, but he does not write him off or despair about him. He genuinely hopes that his brother can still be redeemed.

In his treatment of characters, Mqhayi does not concentrate on the living descendants only. He goes beyond life's boundaries, to the ancestral world. Vuyisile, the father of the twins, is given an important role to play. Although he is dead his influence can still be felt in his family and in the society at large. This fact is brought out by Mxhuma when he asks if the lamentation ceremony was performed or not for Vuyisile. Mqhayi(1931:10-11) through Ndlombose also brings this fact to light when he, after listening to both litigants says:

Taruni, Zidwasha, makube litaru... makungabi tyala. Aba bantwana babambeneyo, bazalwa siti, uyise akako ufile, ufele pakati kwetu, lento yeyetu ayizang'ibeko abantwan'aba ngabetu, abalamli siti, makubaliswe, makuyiw'emva, makulungiswe.

Peace Honourable ones, let there be peace... let there be no case. These children who are at loggerheads are born of us, their father is not present, he is dead, he died among us, this

problem is ours, we are the mediators, let us narrate, let us trace our steps, let us put things right.

The fact that philosophical arguments or a certain polemic inevitably emerge from this novel is an indicator of the author's grasp of this particular aspect of the genre.

In Babini's social capacity his individuality is largely predetermined by his social status and his specific position within the social hierarchy. In Xhosa tradition no person is allowed to do anything which does not agree with the set code of conduct and nobody is seen as an individual. All people have mystic bonds with the dead and the living of the clan. In other words, this means that although the individual has the right to determine how he wants to lead his life, his actions are still determined and monitored by the society within which he lives. The individual has a real existence only in terms of the general frame work of the community.

Babini, who is portrayed as a non-conformist is exonerated because Mxhuma shifts the blame from him and puts it on the whole male population. Mxhuma is of the opinion that Babini's deviant behaviour is a result of displeasure on the part of the ancestral spirits caused by an act of omission. The male population did not do what it was supposed to have done. They failed to slaughter the ceremonial beast, *inkomo yokukhuza*, for Vuyisile. This recognition of diminished individual responsibility in turn justifies the greater tolerance

shown by Wele in his treatment of his non-conformist brother. At the same time there are no punitive measures taken against him because he is regarded as not altogether responsible for his actions.

Although the expense of holding the ceremony was going to be incurred by Vuyisile's family, it was still the duty of the male section in the population to see to it that the lamentation ceremony for Vuyisile was performed. Even though Mqhayi has given his characters autonomy it should be obvious that they are conceived in terms much larger than themselves, in terms of a higher totality that comprehends traditional setting. Responsibility is a central theme in Mqhayi's vision of political change. In an African context this notion of responsibility has specific reference to kinship structures. Thus, Obiechina (1975:84) argues that an individual in African societies, is always responsible to the group and thus should conform to accepted behaviour patterns:

The hold of kinship on the development of the individual personality is also crucial. A man's actions, especially if they are blameworthy are regarded as a reflection on his kinship group. For this reason, the group exerts pressure on its members to ensure social conformity and this in turn helps to curb the development of an adventurous spirit without which true individuality cannot emerge.

This is why we find Wele taking action against his brother. If he had not done that, the blame would not be put on his brother only but would reflect on his family and those related to him. It would also have reflected on

the whole nation. They would appear as people who condoned what Babini was doing. This point emphasizes the role of one's kinsmen in shaping one's behaviour. The question of identity appears to reign supreme. In Ityala Lamawele we get evidence of Mqhayi's grasp of the true nature of the relationship of the individual to society through his method of defining characters which seems to be based on traditional views of social identification. A wife's identification in terms of her husband is an acknowledgement of the patrilineal basis of family organization in the villages with which the novel deals, whereas the identification of children through their parents, and vice-versa, indicates the social significance of these relationships. Mqhayi (1931:3) puts this point clearly when he asks:

" Ningabafo bakabani? "
 " Singabafo bakaVuyisile "
 " Whose sons are you? "
 " We are Vuyisile's sons "

Characters are referred to by various names. Wele and Babini are referred to as "abafo bakaVuyisile", "iinto zikaVuyisile" "amawe"le" and "abafo basemaNzothweni". These numerous names are used for a comprehensive identification.

The children are better known when they introduce themselves through their parents. This fact is further strengthened by Khulile when he was fetched by a group of men sent by Hintsa. He did not know them when they

introduced themselves. When they mentioned their parents, he could recognize them and he went on to tell them about their grandfathers. The question of identity seems to be very crucial in Mqhayi's novel.

The exploration of both the domestic and external aspects of life through characters interacting with a cross-section of the local population is a distinguishing feature of Mqhayi's Ityala Lamawele. His characters emphasize the social relationships which exist in traditional societies. He does not only give us the names of the characters but goes beyond that and gives us their clan names to show their intimacy.

There is also a clear distinction between men and women in political activities. This suggests the organization of the society in traditional societies and how duties were allocated according to sex.

We do not hear much about female characters in Ityala Lamawele. They are also not actively involved in court proceedings because the issue involved largely rules them out. Vuyisile's wife is not given any prominence although she is directly involved because the litigants are both her sons. From a cultural point of view, her non-involvement in the case can be understood. As a woman who had lost her husband, she was not supposed to be seen in such places as *inkundla* (court). She could only appear before court after all the necessary ceremonial slaughterings had been performed. We expect her to come

forward and give evidence because she is the one who lives with the litigants. Her non-involvement deprives the reader of the opportunity to know more about her and to see her character unfolding. Nowhere in the book are we told that she tried to stop Babini from what he was doing. Although this is the case we are not told that she approved of what Babini was doing. She has not been portrayed at all. All we know about her is that she mothered the twins.

Another striking point about Mghayi's characterization is the fact that Wele seems to be very patient and his character seems to be representative of the whole community. He lists a number of accumulated grievances and accusations against his brother. He mentions three cattle which had been taken away by Babini without giving any reason for such an action to anyone. This recurrence of the same offence shows some patience on the part of Wele.

This element of patience is further shown by the group of men who were at the Great Place when Wele came to lay a charge against his brother. The validity of the case is doubtful. The motivation given by Wele for his claim is not a valid one. He says he is laying a charge against his elder brother who is denying him of seniority. There is contradiction in what he says. He cannot claim to be a senior and at the same time admit that he is a junior. Any impatient person would have dismissed the case

summarily. His statement warranted the immediate dismissal of the case.

In his Ityala Lamawe Mqhayi seems to be remoulding the image of the Xhosa people and focussing upon selected individuals whom he represents in action and interaction in the wider circle of social events. He depicts these individuals as intelligent, vigorous, dignified and purposeful creators of their own world and unique history. He is also protesting against those who despise a culture they do not know and at the same time he is against alienating oneself from one's own people.

From the way in which Mqhayi's characters are presented one can conclude that Mqhayi was not interested in character portrayal as such. The main aim was to give an exposition of how Xhosa traditional society operated. The characters are specifically selected with that in mind. Hintsa, who is the paramount chief of the Xhosa people, is given a powerful position. He is the father of the nation and as such the whole nation looks upon him for a solution in times of crisis.

The selection of the characters further supports the arrangement of the society. There is a suggestion by Mqhayi of how the Xhosa people lived in precolonial times. This is shown by his characters who seem to represent a close-knit society. They all know each other and call each other by their clan-names which in Xhosa tradition means something much more than the individual.

For instance, the name, Mxhuma, refers to a particular individual and its significance is limited to its owner. On the other hand, the use of the clan name assumes a more serious dimension. When the author calls Mxhuma, Qhinebe, this becomes an acknowledgement of the whole Qhinebe clan including the dead members.

The patterning of Mqhayi's characters seems to be influenced by the way in which the society is organized. Women and children being on the lower rungs of the social ladder are not given any prominence. The only few women who seem to be involved in this lawsuit make a brief appearance and there is altogether much more involved in the story than the actual case of the twins. Mqhayi is dealing with cultural matters and this has greatly influenced his choice of characters as well as their handling. The conclusion that we draw from the analysis of Mqhayi's characters is that his characters are not revealed as individuals. He has concentrated much on the contribution of individuals towards a common goal allowing them to act individually only as far as their actions do not clash with the principles governing that traditional society.

Thus through the presentation of his characters as one big family, Mqhayi is attempting to show the political climate which existed before the arrival of the colonizers. He achieves this by allowing his characters to act naturally in their natural environment.

The choice of characters further strengthens the claim put forward by Mqhayi in his preface that the arrival of the missionaries threatened the traditional culture. All his characters but Babini seem to be advocating traditional values. That Babini is not traditional alienates him from the general community. This is a clever device where people unite against the one who is a non-conformist. This renders Babini weak. From the presentation of his characters it becomes clear that Mqhayi is not in favour of sacrificing traditional culture for the new one. Although Babini has behaved contrary to the set cultural norms, he is not written off. Instead, he is given a chance to mend his ways.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that Mqhayi's characters serve a didactic and, perhaps, radical purpose. The aim is to call people's attention to the shortcomings of their society. The consciousness of history in Ityala lamawe is portrayed through the self-revealing aspects of its presentation. Private life for characters is allowed no autonomy either within nor beyond the social world. Indeed, the driving force behind the novel is to prove that private destiny is inconceivable beyond its social integration. This it shows specifically by putting private destiny to the test, and it does so through none other than its central character, Babini. Babini is determined to lead a private life. His quest for personal

enjoyment overrules any qualms of conscience. It is the whole thematic force of this novel that to be disconnected in this way is both illusory and self destructive. The only moral rehabilitation appropriate to Babini then lies in a new social commitment. His relations with his brother become more sober, more considered and full of a deep dedication. On the one hand the novel differentiates itself from White domination and on the other it is clearly designed to counter the faults of those who look at themselves with western eyes. The characters in this novel have been used to show that some Black people have internalised colonialism and, whatever they do, the standard of judgement used by them will be the western one. Babini realizes the absolute necessity of his own personal engagement and the impossibility of a pure detachment. This is where the novel reveals the assumption on which it is based, or which it may even appear to be designed to demonstrate. Up to his 'conversion' Babini has proved a wholly intractable case but the novel has shown that even the most recalcitrant of individuals is morally and socially educable. The novel suggests the common codes that underlay the different social and political manifestations of this time as well as their widespread dispersal.

The fact that Mqhayi is a poet keeps on manifesting itself in his works, particularly Ityala Lamawe. He is mainly concerned with what happens to his people. Like a traditional poet, he is the spokesman of his people. Wele, has seen that things are not going well at his

home. Babini gives his own interpretation to the family customs and traditions and this causes a clash between the two brothers.

Just as traditional poets would do, Mqhayi is addressing several points in one time. He is showing his people where they went wrong and at the same time is exposing some of the crimes which were committed by the colonialists. The plea that he makes to his people to reconsider their perception of themselves is put in a very clever way, which is like a folktale.

He does not tell his people directly that

- (a) they also contribute to their oppression;
- (b) they are the ones who oppress themselves;
- (c) they seem to have internalised colonialism.

All the above-mentioned things have led to Black people undermining the very things which kept them together as a nation, their prestigious culture.

Mqhayi has selected some characters with an aim to demonstrate what happens to people when they abandon their customs. He does not say it, but he lets Wele and Babini dramatise that idea.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE TRADITIONAL SETTING
IN ITYALA LAMAWELE

5.1 The setting in Xhosa novels

The general trend in Xhosa writers is to have the setting divided into three main stages. Some writers portray a traditional setting which depicts a Xhosa society before its disruption and destruction by the various agents of European Imperialism. These agents come mainly in the form of missionaries, administrators and traders. In his Ityala Lamawele Mqhayi uses the traditional setting to explore both the domestic and external aspects of life through characters interacting with a cross-section of the local population. This seems to be a distinguishing feature of novels set in the traditional environment. The tendency in a traditional setting is to give a picture of a society which is well organized and self-sufficient. We are presented with an ideal society which is portrayed as economically well-off and politically stable. This is the type of society that we get in Mqhayi's novel. It is an ideal society where everybody strives for peace. Those who do not conform to the social norms are encouraged to improve and mend their ways.

The second group of writers portray a stage which is characterized by the invasion of the Xhosa by the European colonial powers. This is the period during which "Christianity" and "civilization" were introduced.

This period is characterized by the division which existed among people, caused by the new arrivals. Some of the people accepted Christianity and civilization while others rejected it. This period resulted in the formation of two camps namely, the traditionalists and the modernists. While the modernists were attracted to the new mode of life, the traditionalists rejected it outright. This is the case in Jordan's Inggumbo Yeminyanya. This is the period of resistance; a period of protest by those who uphold traditional values.

The third group of writers deal with a period of challenge and confrontation. This is the period during which people started realizing the evils perpetrated by the western nations under the cloak of civilization and Christianity. The books which refer to this period are characterized by their assertion of traditional values over and above western values. This is the case in Jongilanga's Ukuqhawuka Kwembeleko, where all the characters who advocate and uphold western values suffer and eventually die without achieving their various goals.

Our projection is that a fourth group of writers is going to emerge as years go by, and this new stock of writers will show a different period in which the same people who were fighting against exploitation and oppression will turn out to be practising the very things they were fighting against. This period may be termed the 'post-colonial period'. This is already the case in Africa, North of the Limpopo. In Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautiful

Ones Are Not Yet Born we find the local people experiencing more oppression and exploitation in the hands of the people who were in the forefront of the struggle for liberation.

5.1.1 The setting in Ityala Lamawele

In Ityala Lamawele the setting is traditional and is not without socio-political implications. Mqhayi's setting centres around his own people, the Xhosa. There is no mention of the other nations. This is an important and a clever device because one can judge for oneself how the Xhosa people lived before the arrival of the missionaries with their civilization. By portraying a pre-colonial epoch the writer is trying to convey that this part of Africa was not a vacuum. There were people who lived in it long before the arrival of the Europeans with western civilization. This purely traditional setting also emphasizes the cultural aspect of the Xhosa people. By delving into Xhosa culture, Mqhayi is trying to show that culture was not brought to this part of the country by the Westerners. He is trying to negate the idea held by those people who claimed that the Xhosa people had no history - they had no past and no religion. He achieves this by allowing Khulile Majeke to quote some of the incidents which took place a long time ago. For instance, when the delegation enquired about his age, he told them that when he went to the initiation school his fellow initiate was Phalo. It should be noted that the ruling paramount chief at that time was Hintsa and he was

Phalo's great grandson. Hintsa was Kawuta's son and Kawuta was Gcaleka's son and Gcaleka was Phalo's son. In this case Khulile could refer to at least three generations. When he was giving his advice on the case, he quoted some cases which took place a long time ago. All those efforts are aimed at showing those who thought that the Xhosa people had no history were wrong.

If one views Ityala Lamawele from this perspective, then one will see it as a negation of some of the ideas which were propagated by the missionaries and the colonial administrators. It is important that we identify the story as being about Hintsa, his people and their land together with their way of life. We would be failing in our effort to reveal the socio-political undercurrents in Ityala Lamawele if we viewed this novel as being about Wele and Babini only. It is about the Xhosa people as a whole, and what is around them. This becomes evident when one looks at all the characters individually. All of them except Babini have one thing in common - they advocate the supremacy of the group over the individual. The verdict itself proves that. When passing verdict, Hintsa told both litigants to go back home and work together. He even asked them to come to the Great Place to seek help if they needed it.

In his story Mqhayi has depicted Hintsa as the king, which in African traditional society is a key position. He is the centre of an important institution, the nation. Hunter (1969:392) writes:

(I) Nkosi nguyise wabantu.

The king is the father of the nation

Mqhayi uses Hintsa as the nucleus and Xhosaland as his sphere of operation. Hintsa is portrayed as a generous and a very considerate person. He slaughters for the people who are gathered at the Great Place. We know that there was no legal obligation that he should slaughter for those people. This is an allusion to the African *ubuntu* which prevailed at that time and which is clearly shown by the delegation which was sent to Majeke's home. They were slaughtered for by one of the junior chiefs where they slept. Again on their way back, they were slaughtered for.

In this traditional setting Mqhayi stresses the need for keeping peace with the ancestral spirits. He shows that the traditional Xhosa society's life was centred around such religious beliefs. This is taken further by Mqhayi. He does not involve too many women in the lawsuit between the twin-brothers. The only women who are involved are the few elderly women - the midwives and the twin's sisters who are still young girls. This is in keeping with the traditional setting. The courtyard (*inkundla*) is a respected place in traditional societies. It is taboo to women, especially the young and sexually active as well as the newly married ones. The only women who can move freely in the courtyard are those who have reached menopause. The reason for the courtyard to be respected

where the ancestral spirits gather and discuss national issues. This belief emanates from the old Xhosa custom of burying chiefs and heads of families in the cattle kraal. A courtyard is an open area in front of the gate posts of the cattle kraal.

Mqhayi has portrayed a forceful society that operates from sound and carefully thought out philosophies. It is important to recognize that Mqhayi pronounces no direct moral judgement in his novel - not even against those things that he strongly disapproves of. Instead, he allows people to make their own judgement. It is a fact that Mqhayi is against what Babini is doing. When pronouncing verdict, Mqhayi through Hintsa does not say who is right and who is wrong.

The setting is also made clear by the educational system. It is traditional. There are no formal educational centres as one would expect to find in a modern setting. We notice that the homestead plays an important role in as far as education is concerned. The only formal educational institutions mentioned in Ityala Lamawele are the boys' lodge and the girl's rite of passage, *intonjane*. During circumcision boys are secluded from the general society and taken to their lodge. They are taught formally how to behave as circumcised men. Girls, also have their parallel of circumcision. When they reach a certain age, they are taken to seclusion where they are taught by elderly women on how to behave. In traditional societies education is also acquired through traditional

taught by elderly women on how to behave. In traditional societies education is also acquired through traditional dances, songs and conversation.

5.1.2 The implications of the traditional setting

Ityala Lamawele can be seen as an effort by Mghayi to portray the traditional society which he conceives as having existed long before the advent of the Westerners. He does this with the aim of proving to the Westerners that Black people occupied this country long before their arrival. In the same breath he is trying to show the level of civilization which the Xhosa people had reached, even before the arrival of the "civilizers". Here he takes a very strong ideological stance that unless the Black people come to respect their own culture, there is no way in which they can gain respect from the other nations. This point is clearly illustrated by Wele and Babini. Although Babini is designated as the senior twin, Wele and his two younger sisters had no respect for him because he did not respect his culture. It was only after he had shown some respect for his culture that he also gained respect from his family members.

Mghayi has a very good grasp of his novel's social and natural surrounding and with this he captures the rhythm of Xhosa life. In his description of the tumult which ensues after the bard had sung his praises, he even catches the minute details underlying the tribal life. The whole of chapter nine deals with improbable

incidents. Although the incidents are improbable, their improbability seems to be adding clarity to one's understanding of the book because those incidents leave a vivid image. Chapter nine is not without socio-political implications. An old man who has lost his sight and partially lost his hearing, hears faintly that there is pandemonium. The first thing that comes to his mind is that the village is being invaded. He moves out of the house for fear of being burnt alive throwing his hands up in the air as a sign of surrender. His daughter has to go and tell him that there is no invasion. Through this the author is showing that there were invasions and attacks in traditional societies and that traditional Xhosa societies lived like any other society. There were factions as well as disputes. He also exhibits extensive knowledge of the Xhosa society's customs, rituals and ceremonies. When the two brothers were asked to supply a motive for their 'claims', Wele stated that he was the first to be circumcised. The importance and the implications of circumcision are captured in the response of the men who were at the Great Place. The author states that the men 'did not know what to say' after Wele had told them that he was the first one to be circumcised. From this we gather that the order in which things happen is very important. Despite the fact that they were circumcised on the same day, the mere fact that Wele was the first one to have the custom performed on him, was enough to sway the verdict in the minds of the men and counsellors who were at the Great Place.

The author uses the traditional setting to form powerful and beautiful images to match their enthusiasm and efforts to try and solve the dispute. He paints a vivid picture of the men who were gathered at the Great Place on the day of the court hearing. He states that by sunrise the whole courtyard was "red". This refers to the people who had attended the court case who were the "red people" - the ochre people. It should be borne in mind that these people were not from the same village. Some of them came from distant villages. This shows total commitment to a cause of national advancement. Social stability is a pre-requisite for national upliftment.

The author also refers to the delegation which was sent to Lucangwana's place. He states that the delegation was aware that their journey was without misfortunes. Here he quotes wild animals which seemed to be appreciating the delegation. These wild animals which were supposed to have run for dear life did not do so. Instead they seemed to be mesmerized by this group of men. The men in turn did not bother the wild animals. This is an important aspect and a clever device by Mqhayi to reveal some of the traditional beliefs and the harmony the traditional people had with nature. As far as we can judge, Ityala Lamawe appears to be omitting actual naked propaganda statements. Such restraint seems to be the mark of very crafty workmanship, and part of it seems to depend on the writer's choice of narrative technique.

The author uses direct language which is nonetheless punctuated with subtle nuances only obvious to the person whom the speaker is indirectly condemning.

The author paints the African people as being happy in their traditional setting. Whether this contentment arises from apathy, or from the joy of freedom enjoyed in traditional societies seems to be the challenge thrown by Mqhayi to his readers. In this novel he has described how the Xhosa people lived before the advent of the Europeans to a part of Africa previously untouched by White influence and he has made good use of his sources and experiences, and has exercised imaginative originality in integrating cultural aspects with his fictional compositions. What we have in Ityala Lamawele seems to have been selected for specific purposes. Some of those purposes are to expose the evils done by a certain section of the population, like the missionaries who wanted the Xhosa people to abandon their culture, thereby preparing ground for themselves to dominate. Through the use of this traditional setting and the use of a purely Xhosa society, Mqhayi wanted to show that part of the problem emanates from within the Xhosa people themselves. The use of the people from the same family, brothers for that matter, is a direct challenge to the Xhosa people. They must stop pointing fingers at other people and do some introspection. In the setting of Ityala Lamawele we get a homogeneous society. This implies that the whole society knows and shares the same culture and it does not expect anyone to deviate from the cultural norms.

a way of life; it is a religious inheritance, the

1. Van Tromp, J. nd Xhosa Law of Persons p 15

people's very life. It is clear that in his novel Mqhayi's sympathies are with those of his characters who struggle to cling to the dictates of culture - those who advocate cultural heritage because, without culture, an essential part of their life is gone forever. In Mqhayi's novel there is a subtle reference to land ownership. Although he does not refer to any contact between the Xhosa people and the colonizers, one can always sense the allusion thereto. Men and women are portrayed as moving freely in their land. This freedom of movement symbolizes total ownership of land. There is an implied suggestion of land dispossession.

Mqhayi's book deals with the area around the Kei river. It is interesting to note that the bitter contact between the British and the Xhosa took place in a territory known as the British Kaffraria which is an area between the Kei and the Keiskamma river. Mphande (1991:173) writes the following about the British Kaffraria and the Xhosa:

... the Xhosa in the British Kaffraria lost their best lands, their best livestock, and their best young men; their social and spiritual reality was rendered ambiguous by the advent of Christianity. Their economic and social structures were destroyed, and a new capitalist order introduced.

In Ityala Lamawele Mqhayi uses the traditional setting to depict the symbolic meaning behind one of the greatly misinterpreted traditional Xhosa customs, circumcision which the missionaries regarded as one of the pagan practices. To the traditional Xhosa people it was

something more than an aspect of culture. It was a religious ceremony. Through this custom a man was formally incorporated into the society and his status was elevated. For the first time in his life he was given the right to address the other members of the community and also to participate in certain activities which all along had been the privilege of circumcised men. Such rights include attending the tribal meetings at the courtyard and contributing in whatever deliberations are taking place there. Mqhayi records in his autobiography that he took a risk of being excommunicated by church officials and went to the circumcision school². He knew the importance and the advantages of being a circumcised man. He wanted full and formal incorporation into the society.

Babini is portrayed as restless, confused and often dissatisfied. He seems to have a vacuum in his life and is, therefore, searching hard for some meaning in life. This becomes clear when we view his actions against the traditional setting. He is dissatisfied with his family and decides to abandon them and go to reside at Pekesa's home. The confusion is to be found in the contradiction in his actions. First he chased Pekesa away when he came to discuss the holding of the lamentation ceremony then suddenly later on he gives himself wholeheartedly to Pekesa. Pekesa is also guilty of this contradiction. He allowed Babini to stay at his home after being degraded by him and he knew that there was a misunderstanding

2. Mqhayi, S.E.K. 1975 UMqhayi WaseNtabozuko p 58

between Babini and his twin, Wele. If he were genuine enough he could have tried to call the two brothers together and try and settle the dispute. Instead we find Pekesa accompanying Babini when attending the court hearing. We are also told that Babini becomes happy when he is in the company of people other than his family. He gets his satisfaction outside his family. Life has no meaning to him when he is in the company of the other family members. He seems to be avoiding reality. He is running away from his responsibility.

Mqhayi has portrayed a society whose life rhythms are determined by certain values and beliefs. It is a close-knit society which places high value on home. Babini who underestimates the importance of home or despises whatever it has to offer, becomes the loser in the end. Babini is trying to dismiss his traditional background and also attempts to run away from the reality of his situation by attaching himself to Pekesa and other characters who are showing him things the way he wanted to be shown them. On the other hand, Wele is portrayed as having accepted the traditional way of life in its entirety. He is diametrically opposed to all that his brother, Babini upholds. It would appear that Mqhayi admires this aspect in Wele because in his evidence, Wele cites all the cultural things which seem to be getting support from those gathered at the Great Place. He mentions circumcision, *intonjane* (girl's rite of passage) and the respect he has for the family herd. Mqhayi seems to enjoy Wele's respect for the Xhosa way of life or

faith that endows men with energy and joys of life that give them dignity but he views Christianity and the traditional past as complementary and does not advocate going back to traditional ways, although finding much that is good in the past.

The crucial point here is that Mqhayi's admiration for traditional African life is not another brand of exotic romanticism. What Mqhayi is doing is searching in the old Africa and extracting what he can to explain and interpret today's world. To this end, he uses Wele as his vehicle. It is Wele who points a finger at the failures of his traditional system and helps the whole community to see where it has gone wrong.

At the court it was discovered that the cause of the dispute was an act of omission. This was only realized after Wele and Babini had been engaged in the dispute for more than three years. Through this Mqhayi is saying true salvation comes, and must emanate from, within rather than from without. Black people must not think of themselves as people who are helpless; people who cannot do anything on their own without getting help from the West. This is evidenced by Khulile Majeke who stated that he was not changing Lucangwana's verdict. The true solution to the dispute did not come from Khulile Majeke. It came from Mxhuma. He is the one who enquired about the holding of the lamentation ceremony. When the men confirmed that the lamentation ceremony was never performed for the dead father of the twins, the Great

Place made an undertaking to hold it. Things went back to normal immediately after the undertaking by the Great Place to hold the lamentation ceremony.

5.2. Conclusion

In conclusion one can say the traditional setting in Ityala Lamawele has been used specifically to expose the social as well as the political conditions under which the Xhosa people lived. This setting has also helped in elucidating some of the otherwise possibly obscure aspects in this novel. The behaviour patterns of the twin brothers have been made clear through the use of this traditional setting. It is easy to understand a character if that character is studied against the background of his culture. On the one hand the traditional setting demonstrates the precolonial unity and on the other exposes the present day realities.

In this chapter I have argued that Mqhayi has exploited even the setting to put across his ideological stance. This, therefore, suggests that whoever is trying to read Ityala lamawele must not rely on the story only. All the different aspects which are found in this novel help in clarifying some of the seemingly obscure issues in it. Kunene (1992 : 7) has the following to say about the African situation:

We have, somehow, been painted into a corner by history, and the peculiar circumstances under which the African writer writes and the African literary critic critiques remind us daily of

the tragedy of Europe's violation of the integrity of African societies.

The traditional setting in Ityala lamawe seems to be addressing the issue stated above by Kunene. Through the use of a purely traditional setting Mghayi seems to be fighting this violation of the integrity of African societies. He gives minute details of how the Xhosa people lived before the advent of the missionaries and their civilisation. The descriptions of the places and people bear testimony to the total freedom these people had. There are no physical barriers which stop people from going to other places. The only borders available are the imaginary ones. They are there only to show how far the territory of a particular chief extends. It should be mentioned that these boundaries were meant for administrative purposes and not to limit the people's movements. The freedom portrayed to be reigning among these people is further evidence of the freedom of mind from mental slavery. With this traditional setting Mghayi seems to be addressing, and refuting at the same time, some of the allegations that were levelled against the black people by the missionaries. The fact that Xhosa literature was not written does not necessarily mean that there was no literature in the African languages. Majeke, in Ityala Lamawe, is reported to have told many interesting stories to the delegation that was sent to fetch him to come and help the great place resolve a complicated lawsuit. These stories were of cultural importance because he told the delegation how things were during their time and also mentioned how arable the lands

were. Kunene further argues that the term "African" itself, especially as applied to literature, is first, foremost, and last a political one imposed on us by history. He (Kunene) (1992: 10) goes on to say:

... while we cannot change history, we can certainly use it to critique our current modes of thought and behaviour. As the inheritors of the bitter fruits of partition and colonization, we are burdened with the task of living a myth and trying to make it work.

What Kunene says seems to be what Mqhayi is trying to achieve when he uses a purely traditional setting in his book. He is using history to critique the current modes of thought and behaviour. He is refuting the myth perpetrated by the White people that Blacks are inferior. At the same time he is arousing a consciousness which would make his people feel proud of being black. He achieves this by showing the legal skills the Xhosa people had even before they were 'civilised' by the missionaries. He shows their skills by giving them a legal "riddle" to solve. Here, again he draws heavily from the Xhosa culture where riddle-solving was a form of training one's logical thinking³. The way the dispute is resolved shows the level of civilisation the Xhosa people had attained even before they were introduced to the alphabet.

The question of culture seems to be very crucial in Mqhayi's book as well as in the study of African

3. Satyo S.C et. al Sasinoncwadi Kwatanci p49

literature as a whole. Regarding culture, Kunene (1992:11) argues that:

... no one could claim to be a specialist in "African" literature without being familiar with the individual cultures relevant to the geographical areas of their speciality.

In his Ityala Lamawele Mqhayi touches on all the aspects and subtleties underlying and informing a traditional society. When Babini is reported to be ignoring his home, the image of the author and Xhosa culture that emerge in the book derive their effect from the African idea of home as shelter and the place for communal oneness. Human interaction in Ityala lamawele can be summed up in Kunene's words (1985: 187) when he writes:

... out there is a jungle. A hero who turns his back on the courtyards and cattle-folds and grazing fields of his home is entering this jungle with all its beasts and monsters.

What Kunene says in the above quotation is clearly displayed by the concern of almost the whole community when Babini behaves in a manner that showed a lack of respect for his home. Babini's community was aware of the dangers of his actions. And as elderly people they felt it was their duty to save the young from going astray. If they had not done that, that would not only reflect on the behaviour of Babini but the whole society would be seen as having failed in its duty to bring Babini up in a proper manner. As a communal society, the communal oneness referred to in this chapter is the one that incorporates the departed members of the family

also. And this means that if the ancestral spirits are not appeased, there is no way in which they can protect their living descendants. This then has a rippling effect because for people to be able to follow and respect their customs and traditions the environment should permit for such practices. It is therefore our contention that the traditional setting in this novel is used with an aim to show the relevance of custom and tradition to the Xhosa people.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Mqhayi's novel, Ityala Lamawele, coincides with some of the major political moods of its time. It is fully socialized and fully absorbed into the dominant patterns of thought, mood and outlook of the time from which it emerges. Mqhayi seems to be subscribing to the principle of non-racialism or inter-racial co-operation. He appears to be hoping for a more orthodox non-racial consciousness in South Africa.

6.1.1 General observations

Ityala Lamawele can be studied on two or three levels. It can be studied as a novel for its actual story and for entertainment. It can also be studied for its symbolic meaning. Ityala Lamawele gives us a rare opportunity to consider some of the more straightforward, but nonetheless exciting ways in which an historic response is generated in fiction. This novel shows that there is between the novel and the historical world to which it responds a fairly direct transitional and transformational medium - none other than the social history of the author himself, his cultural background and the implicit social history of the text. Ityala

Lamawele is far less arbitrary, far more socially inclusive and far more historically substantial. If politics are social, then the social world has its political overtones. About the work of art Amuta (1989:78) cites Hegel and he writes:

Every work belongs to its age, to its nation, and to its environment, and depends upon particular historical and other ideas and aims. For this reason art scholarship further requires a vast wealth of historical information of a very special kind.

The above idea is further reiterated by Brown in Chapman (1982:55) who quotes Irele. He notes:

Literature has no meaning detached from the feelings of the people who it represent. It is not the work itself which in the last resort is of value, which is sacred, but the human beings behind the work and it is out of their lives that literature draws its significance and its truth. Every work, therefore, must be seen as a summing-up of experience, in some profound way must be centred at the live centre of the collective interest and the common experience of the writer's group.

What Irele says is true of any literature, especially African literature. Literature in Africa is functional. The African authors, especially those who write in indigenous languages seem not to believe in art for art's sake. To them literature cannot be detached from the society.

In its analysis, this study has tried to interpret the novel, Ityala Lamawele, within an African context. The motivation behind such an approach is that many writers,

especially African writers, have been inhibited by existing literary definitions and conventions which have curtailed the true expression of their total experience as Blacks. Mqhayi, as if anticipating the problems of literary forms that have now emerged, did not show any respect for these conventions from the very word go. We have also tried to show that the use of these literary conventions can be unfair at times especially if they are taken as a criterion to judge the value of the book. Mutloatse (1985:5) vehemently argues that:

We will have to *donder* conventional literature: old fashioned critics and reader alike. We are going to pee, spit, and shit on literary conventions before we are through; we are going to kick and pull and push and drag literature into the form we prefer ... We are not going to be told how to re-live our feelings, pains and aspirations by anybody who speaks from the platform of his own rickety culture. We'll write our poems in a narrative form; we'll write journalistic pieces in poetry form; we'll dramatise our poetic experiences; we'll poeticise our historical dramas. We will do all these things at the same time.

It is interesting to note that this is what Mqhayi did in his novel. Mqhayi simply wrote without any regard for literary conventions. If one analyses Mutloatse's argument, one is bound to conclude that the moving away from the inhibitions of literary definitions and conventions is a political move. If we accept that, then it goes without saying that Mqhayi was also treating politics as a valid subject of his novel both in content and in form. The deviant nature of his plot structure and the non-development of his characters bear testimony to this. Mqhayi seems to be breaking all these literary

conventions deliberately because he has made a statement in his preface that he is not writing fiction. This means that the most important thing to Mqhayi is the message that he wants to convey to his readers. Although Ityala Lamawele does not fit into the literary conventions as shown in chapter two and chapter four of this study it is interesting to note that such 'flaws' do not affect the impact of the story. The story has a very strong impact because the facts are stated flatly as they happened and Mqhayi had no trouble trying to put them in a particular manner which would satisfy the requirements as laid down by the advocates of literary conventions. His argument seems to be that the African novel should be left to steer its own course and cater for its local needs first, before being rushed to a universal sphere. In this sense he does not apologize for treating politics as a valid content of his novel. Being a committed spokesman of his society, Mqhayi cannot avoid engagement with politics or any other force that affects the lives of the people. Diamond (1989:435) makes the following comment about literature and society:

The literature of a society tells us much about its culture, social structure and even politics ... In particular, fiction may give us special insights into how culture and history intersect with and reshape, or are reshaped by, the lives of people, ordinary and extraordinary.

This point is taken further by Webb who views it from a slightly different angle. He (Webb) (1980: 24) quotes Lukacs and he says:

The genuine categories of literary forms are not simply literary in essence. They are forms of life especially adapted to the articulation of great alternatives in a practical and effective manner and to the exposition of the maximal inner potentialities of forces and counterforces.

Chapter two of this dissertation illustrates the above idea. Mqhayi concentrated more on the message he wanted to convey to his people than on trying to force his work to fit into existing conventions. In short, this novel may be seen as an agent of political culture and the novelist a political philosopher and teacher. Much as this novel reflects the assumptions and values of the culture in which it is produced, it cannot be limited only to a social record. It also helps to mould new attitudes. Commenting on literature Murray (1973:11) states:

In truth, it is literature in the primordial sense, which establishes the context for social and political action ... The writer who creates stories or narrates incidents which embody the essential nature of human existence in his time not only describes the circumstances of human actuality and the emotional texture of personal experience, but also suggests commitments and endeavours which he assumes will contribute most to man's immediate welfare as well as to his ultimate fulfillment as a human being.

Ityala Lamawele is a historically determined and complex admixture of art forms marked by a reactive stance towards historical experience. It portrays a traditional society where the Xhosa people lived communally. Such a

society is portrayed as founded on very solid social norms and it is economically viable. It is a true society which has people with different behaviour patterns. There are those members with socially unacceptable behaviours as well as the conformists as instanced by Babini and Wele respectively. Although Mqhayi does not say it explicitly, there is an implied condemnation of "Christianity" and "civilization". This is shown by Mqhayi's avoidance of anything which has to do with civilization and Christianity in his novel. His characters are faced with a serious problem. They have to determine who of Vuyisile's sons should be given powers to run the family affairs. In resolving that problem, he uses the traditional people and they handle the case with great expertise. He emphasizes the solidarity of the tribe which is neither affected nor attracted by these Western ideals. He also seems to be suggesting that if the Black people can work together, they can easily overcome some of the major problems they are faced with.

Mqhayi is at pains to show that Black people did not hear of law and culture for the first time from the Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but had a philosophy of great depth and value of beauty, that they had poetry as many incidents are punctuated with poetry and, above all, dignity. It is this dignity that they lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain. He is trying hard to show people what happened to them, what they lost. He goes further to

show the people how they can regain their lost dignity - through respecting their culture.

Ityala Lamawele can be seen as one of the first novels to address matters affecting the Black people socially and politically. This might be due to the fact that Mqhayi was among the first Xhosa writers to use the traditional setting and directly address the political situation of the Xhosa people at that time. His novel did not have the religious theme as Ndawo's U-Hambo LukaGqobhoka. In this novel Mqhayi seems to have drawn heavily from the oral forms of literature. His narrative technique suggests this. This narrative technique is coupled with the use of the avoidance terms - *hlonipha* language which is a cultural aspect. Commenting on the development of literature, Irele (1981:20) notes:

In some African writers, there has been a direct development from the oral to the written within the indigenous language itself, and it is obvious in these cases that the forms handed down from the oral tradition exert a direct pressure in these cases, as regards both themes and internal features - a structural connection exists therefore between the 'old' and 'new'

Although his novel was modelled on the traditional literature Mqhayi was a pioneer in the field of fiction. This must not be taken as a form of belittling or underrating Ndawo's effort. It should be taken as a genuine breakthrough by Mqhayi from the prescriptions of the missionaries. He shifted from the way in which many authors used to write. Most of the early works teemed with Christian themes. Since Mqhayi published his Ityala

Lamawe many writers such as Jordan, Jongilanga, Qangule et cetera have followed his style and all have one thing in common, their novels deal with certain aspects of Xhosa culture - the importance of custom and tradition in traditional Xhosa societies.

The first impression and the first edition of Ityala Lamawe was an extended metaphor. The 1931 version, the one that has been used throughout this study, appeared as an historical documentary on an aspect of Xhosa life. Eagleton (1986:196) writes the following about literature:

Literature, we are told, is vitally engaged with the living situations of men and women.

From what Eagleton writes, one can see that Mqhayi believed in the functionalism of literature. Mqhayi can be regarded as a pioneer in Xhosa literary works. He set a pattern which was followed by many writers who came after him. His contribution in the literary world was not only limited to the Xhosa speaking people only. It transcended the tribal boundaries and had an impact in the other places which were far away. Herdeck (1973:260) comments about Mqhayi in the following manner:

H.I.E. Dhlomo, the famous Zulu poet, eulogized Mqhayi as the last link between the old tribal bards who extemporized their verses and the modern Westernized African who writes.

Dhlomo was not eulogizing Mqhayi solely on the basis of the number of books he had written. He was considering

the impact of the content of his writings. Goodwin (1982: X) writes:

... 'art for art's sake' has always been derided ... by African writers ... and they have asserted that African poetry has, by the nature of the society from which it springs, an essential communality or functionalism...

We can say that Mqhayi paved the way for the African writers to move away from Christian writings. Christian writing in this case will be taken to mean artistic works dealing with religious themes. Writers like Jordan Qangule, Mmango, Tamsanga and others went even further to challenge Christian religion. Mqhayi took the lead in showing people that there was nothing wrong in writing about certain aspects of their culture. By so doing he opened up new avenues which, up to that time were never explored. In his writings he blended his culture with the history of his people. Amuta (1989:80) contributes the following about history and literature:

History is conceived in its materialist sense as the complex of material forces and objective conditions which shape social experience and therefore furnish the raw material for literature. Because it consists of the activities of real people in active roles in equally real situations, history is not only knowable but also a process resulting from human activity.

By treating a theme which draws heavily from his culture and history, Mqhayi has contributed to the development of Xhosa literary forms and broadened its scope.

Because Mqhayi was neither interested in writing a Biblical story nor fiction, there are some signs of dissonance in his plot structure and character portrayal. That dissonance cannot be taken to be a flaw but does raise a series of questions such as who crafted that piece of work, when and why. He has succeeded in showing that Xhosa-written literature emanates from Xhosa life and language. His work embraces the social, political, economic and emotional forms through which Xhosa life is revealed. He approaches Xhosa life from a variety of angles. Depending on time and space, the social attitudes of his society can be characterized as subservient, non-conformist, loyal and ambivalent. We get people who represent different personalities.

6.1.2 Summary of observations

In Ityala Lamawele Mqhayi reveals a society dignified in its pace, accommodating and communal. His novel is full of re-discovery and assertion. He delves into Xhosa culture and traditions, explores Xhosa history and creates a new image for the Xhosa speaking people, an image which recognizes the flaws of the past and rejects its unqualified rejection by the other cultures.

Mqhayi furnishes what seems to be an authentic portrayal of Xhosa life and social behaviour. Through this Mqhayi is trying to argue that the Xhosa speaking people should not honour their colonial masters for their degradation of Xhosa life, institutions and culture.

Although Ityala Lamawele does not satisfy the requirements of a novel, using the existing literary conventions as our criterion, the impact of Mqhayi on Xhosa literary consciousness and endeavours remains permanent. Mqhayi's pre-occupation is with a human society whose way of life is only superficially different from that of other cultures. Though not explicitly, Mqhayi may be reacting to racial prejudice. The contention implicit in this novel is that the Xhosa people had their shortcomings because they were essentially human beings. He knows that the people themselves had doubts about some of their ways, as instanced by Babini's behaviour, and itched for change. We have Babini who has a deviant behaviour. He does not respect custom and tradition. On the other hand, there is Wele, the defender of custom and tradition.

Ityala lamawele portrays a complete society worth living in, in spite of the weaknesses within it. Mqhayi sees himself as a "teacher" with important messages to convey, especially to his people so that they can begin to take an interest in themselves and their past - culture. Writing about Mqhayi and his works, Scheub in Andrzejewski et. al. (1985:600) observes:

One of his most famous works was the novel, Ityala Lamawele (Lovedale 1914, The case of the twins), in which he effectively defended traditional Xhosa forms of justice against denigrations by South African whites.

6.2 Conclusion

In conclusion one can say Mqhayi made a great contribution to Xhosa literature and to the Xhosa language. Ityala Lamawele shows that this novel was not produced for entertainment only but was a reaction to what was happening at the time of its production. The Xhosa people were fast moving away from their traditions and were getting influenced by the western nations to accept their culture. Another thing which Mqhayi seems to be addressing is the division and disunity among the Black people. This seems to be a serious concern to Mqhayi. If we look at the pain the Great Place took in trying to restore the cordial relations between the two brothers, then we are bound to agree that Mqhayi is advocating unity.

It is interesting to note that the young generation of writers today, especially those who write in English, have decided to write as they feel without the inhibitions caused by the literary conventions. They all address the *status quo* but using different devices and literary canons.

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